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LYRICAL POEMS



LYRICAL POEMS

BY

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LATE FELLOW OF EXETER COLLEGE, OXFORD

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TO THE
IMMORTAL MEMORY
OF
FREE ATHENS

*Where are the flateless form,
The sweet propriety of measured phrase,
The words that clothe the idea, not disguise,
Horizons pure from haze,
And calm clear vision of Hellenic eyes?*

*Strength ever veil'd by grace:
The mind's anatomy implied, not shown;
No gaspings for the vague, no fruitless fires:—
Yet, heard 'neath all, the tone
Of those far realms to which the soul aspires.*

*Upon life's field they look'd
With fearless gaze, trusting their sight,—the while
Conscious the God's whole scheme they could not see;
But smiled a manly smile,
And the sane song spoke the heart's sanity.*

*That unfantastic strain,
Void of weak fever and self-conscious cry,—
Truth bold and pure in her own nakedness,—
What modern hand can try,
Tracing the delicate line 'twixt More and Less ?*

*Yet as who, aiming high,
Must aim far o'er the mark that he can gain,
—O shining City of the Maiden Shrine:—
I name thee not in vain,
If these late Northern lays be kin to thine.*

. Jan. 1871.

Book First



MELUSINE

I

Here, as one sits on the sand,
So brimming and smooth comes the sea,
That 'tis almost the same to be here,
And within its bosom to be ;—
Glassily lispng, lispng low, lispng amorously :—
A wash of crystal runs up
And freshens the pebbled shore,
And can hardly float the drift.
Or turn the light sea-weed o'er.
The Sun, like an aged king,—
Aged, yet still in his might,—
Has one more half hour of glory
His wealth on the world to fling,
A golden path to the west and the lands beyond
the night.

2

The wild sharp rocks around
Grow wilder against the sky,
As the fisherman sees at his feet
A film of green go by ;
Fringed, as the work of a girl, and folded curiously.
Careless, he picks from the brine ;
Careless, he drops from his sight ;
When lo ! between him and the sun,
What flashes as light in light ?
What maiden, what gray-green eyes,
Pale gleam of golden hair,
Pale as gold pure from the mine,
Lips eager with fear and surprise ;—
What deep-sea maiden, what pearl and wonder of
Ocean, is there ?

3

His heart leapt high as he look'd :
For oft had he heard men say
How the royal girls of the deep
Beneath their green heaven play,
Fairer than any we see in the sun-light of common day.

And the love of Kathleen in her pride,
And the smile of Kathleen in her glee,
Faded and fell from his heart
As he looked on the maid of the sea :
‘ ‘Tis not I have a crown of gold,
Nor a palace on earth for my Love ;
But I clasp her with human love ;
With a man’s blood my heart is bold ;
The sun of the sea-world is dim to the merest
star-light above.’

4

With tears, large tears, she pray’d him
The green-fringed fillet restore,
That she might go under the seas
To her home and her girlhood once more,
The central calm of the deep, however earth’s tem-
pests roar.
But the blood was strong at his heart,
And he ask’d and denied so long,
That, whether o’ermaster’d by love
Or sense of incurable wrong,
She bent to the passionate prayer,
She gave ear to the name of wife ;

Within his cottage to dwell,
Having part in human care,
And changing for earthly things her birthright of
Ocean life.

From the happy kingdom
Without sun or snow,
Frost or rain or tempest,
Melusine must go.

There no night comes near them,
Nor the gloom of storms ;
But their emerald heaven
Glow with blazing forms.

There the gray sea-serpent
From the liquid skies
Leans his hairy forehead
And his searching eyes.

There the forest corals
Stretching thousand hands,
Burn with flowers of ruby
On the silver sands.

O'er the windless level
Purple shadows flow
Where, in their dim heaven,
Monsters flash and go.

Souls of wave-whelm'd seamen
There white arms caress;
Whilst their friends bemoan them,
Lapt in happiness.

Day runs into day, as
One who draws no breath
Through a year of visions;
Neither life nor death :—

As when storms are silent
In their summer cave,
All the plains of Ocean
Are one single wave :—

Neither life nor death, but
Deeper calm between,
Deeper peace than Eden's :—
Ah ! for Melusine !

1

The happy days go by ;
The life of earth is bless'd, where, by the mere,
The cottage sees its second self below
So still, so clear,
That calm itself has no more to bestow.

2

Gray mountains all around
Immoveable ; green meadows bosom'd high,
Haunted with solitude ; the clinking bell
Far off, yet nigh,
Where the still herds like spots of shadow dwell :—

3

Lush aspens by the lake ;
Lake-level pastures ; and the hidden nook
Where, o'er worn boulders arrowy breaking by,
The clear brown brook
Makes stillness stiller with its one sweet cry :—

4

Gray mountains all around ;
Above, the crystal azure, perfect, pale ;

As if a skirt of Eden's heaven forgot
Arch'd o'er the vale,
Guarding a peace beyond earth's common lot.

5

All these things, day by day,
So wrought on her, though fairy-born and wild,
—As the soft handling of the mother steals
Into the child,
Till it becomes the gentleness it feels,—

6

That from the seas her heart
Turn'd landward to that cottage-life :—the kine,
The garden, the low bee-hive bench, the trough
Of hustling swine,
The colt that neigh'd beholding her far off.

7

Rarely her steps were set
To that small village by the bay, where he
Follow'd his craft, and with some inborn sense
Of courtesy
Kept from her eyes the nets and cordage, whence

8

He drew their food. But she,
When heat of summer spoil'd the chase afloat,
Would lead him to the lake, and grasp the oar
Of some small boat
That lay there, and push merrily from the shore.

9

But in the midmost mere's
Deep crystal, pure, invisible, where the keel
Hung like a bird o'er some sheer mountain glen,
A light would steal
Into her eyes, a passionate tone :—and then

10

Quick tears : till now she seized
Her oar, and breathless made the land, and wild
Ran in, and leant above her firstborn's cot,
And slowly smiled,
As when one sees a face too long forgot.

Queen of the crystalline lake,
Lift thy liliated head on high ;
Lift thy pearl-wreathed arms, and take
One who weeps, and knows not why :
To her home 'neath Ocean green
Bear the long-sought Melusine.

Where thy silver palace shines,
Where the secret caverns be,
Spar-wall'd labyrinthine mines
Winding to the central sea ;
Where the waves await their Queen,
Carry thou fair Melusine.

All our merry maids are dumb,
All our grottoes gloom'd with night ;
Coral groves of crimson bloom,
Missing her, are bare and white ;
All our pearls have lost their sheen,
Changed to tears for Melusine.

Queen of the crystalline lake,
Lift thy liliated head on high !

All beneath the seas awake
Wild lament, and tear, and sigh,
As soft snows with rain between,
For the love of Melusine.

I

O Man, who, in the foolish heart of pride,
Holds himself born of the superior kind,
And boasts his crude half-knowledge, coarse and
blind,
Scorning the smaller footsteps at his side,
And narrower scale of less-experienced mind :—

2

While Nature, working in her unspoil'd child,
Oft gives an insight better than the lore
That he attains, plying the plough and oar,
Or 'mong the blunted souls by lust defiled,
Or smooth-worn by the world, and rounded o'er.

3

For She, foreseeing what we lose by life,
Is born afresh in every babe, and new :—

And most men raze her stamp, and prove untrue ;
But the girl's heart is less with self at strife,
And keeps till night some drops of dawning's dew.

4

So Melusine, when again she saw the cot,
And touch'd her babe, and lull'd its yearning cries,
Felt all the mother at her bosom rise,
And took the colour of her earthly lot,
And that wild music faded from her eyes.

5

Then pass'd forth on the common household ways ;
Making base things by her sweet service sweet,
Letting the year in one long present fleet,
As though the past at will she could efface,
And all to-morrows would to-day repeat.

6

And all things round unchanged, unchangeable
Appear'd : the mountains ; the green slopes on high ;
The trees ; the sunny pastures of the kye ;
The lake that kept its crystal secrets well ;
And the clear streamlet with its long sweet cry.

7

Only the babe grew, lovelier in his growth ;
Pacing the earthen floor with solemn feet ;
Then, with quick turns, and cries of laughter sweet ;
Then, the loud, sturdy steps of sunburnt youth,
Till her brave fisher-boy stood forth complete.

8

Also a gray-eyed girl, who smiled and went
Just as the little words that Melusine
Alone could follow, came her lips between ;
O'er whom, with folded hands, the mother bent
Weekly ; one small green mound in churchyard green.

9

Thus fared she many years : and though by right
Born Queen beneath the waves, so graciously
She set herself to all, whate'er might be,
Of duty, that no maid through Erin bright
Was wifelier in her low estate than she.

10

One morn the boy, now capable and strong,
Cried, ' Mother, I would with my father go :

Why warn me from the waves, and speak of woe
And perils that to seamen's toil belong?
I am a man; and a man's life must know.'

11

—Once more she stroked the hair, so often stroked
In golden childhood, kiss'd so often then,—
And said, 'Go forth, my child, now man 'mongst men;
Go, prosper:'—then 'neath smiles her fear she cloak'd,
Sighing 'Tis Nature's cry: I strove in vain.'

12

So they went forth, the seaman and his son.
She sate, and pray'd a prayer, and took her wheel;
And though to the green grave half bent to steal,
Thought "'Twill but make me feel the more alone;'
And with soft fingers fed the flying reel.

13

Higher the sun went up in windless blue,
Such calm as almost is akin to fear;
A blaze shot skyward from the crystal mere;
The very gnat that humm'd her chamber through
Was comfort,—solitude press'd in so near.

14

Through the small open casement stream'd the noise
Of utter silence, audible, intense.

She rose and look'd out on the lake ; and thence
The cry as of a child came ; a child's voice ;
Once heard :—then, utter silence, blank, intense.

15

And all things round unchanged, unchangeable,
Appear'd : the lone gray hills ; the perfect sky ;
The trees ; the sunny pastures of the kye ;
The lake in sapphire beauty mirror-still ;
And the clear streamlet with its long sweet cry.

16

To the small churchyard and the mound of green
She look'd ; and a white flame above it burn'd,
That went before her eyes, where'er she turn'd.
And then a change fell on sweet Melusine,
And her whole heart toward the lost infant yearn'd.

17

And that fair landscape round, so still, so fair,
Was hateful in its fairness :—the pure sky,

The mountains in their gray unsympathy,
The presences within the silent air,
Mock'd her. And, as one who himself must fly,

18

She turn'd, and 'gainst the wall she set her eyes,
Crying 'My baby'!: nor spoke other word;
Nor could she pray, nor look around; nor heard
The sudden roar and menace of the skies,
Nor how the lake through its dim depths was stirr'd:—

19

Nor how the seas were calling to the shore
With outstretch'd angry arms and thunder voice,
Wracking whole fleets in pride like riven toys;
And deep beneath the riot and uproar,
The flute-clear paeon of a wild *Rejoice!*

20

But she lay long; and all those vanish'd days
Of the lost treasure came within her breast:
The throes, the glory when her girl she press'd;
The smile that first broke o'er the passive face;
The gracious limbs, the warm, the oft-caress'd:

21

The little hands that hid the face in play ;
The shout of pride, half cry, half triumph sweet,
When first alone upon the trembling feet ;
The lisp, that makes the mother's heart so gay,
When once the doubtful lips her name repeat :—

22

The flower, the lamb, the baby Melusine :—
And then she knew not what she was, nor where :
But struck blind hands out in her blind despair,
Pierced by that saddest, last, *Such things have been—*;
And where beside the cradle, stripp'd and bare,

23

An old sea-basket lay, her fingers sought
Some faded thing, some relic torn and small,
Dear though long hid from touch and sight of all,
Which for the little one those hands had wrought
In days that God himself could not recall.

24

—Ah, Melusine ! ah mother now no more !
For what she sought, her passion seeks in vain :

Another relic 'tis she sees again,—
The amulet which her youthful forehead bore
When at her will she clove the vassal main.

25

There, since that sunset hour when in the bay
She bade farewell to all she once had been,
Had slept the magic of the fillet green ;
As dormant till some city's destined day,
The earthquake lurks within its cave unseen.

26

With that, upon her all her youth rush'd in
As the great wave when Etna heaves the sea ;
The long long years on earth pass'd utterly,
As night's sad dreams, at first awakening,
Break up to shreds, and fade, and we are free.

27

So, long pent Nature had at last her way !
And Melusine leapt back to her early lot,
Seeking the bay, since youth unseen, forgot,
And headlong plunged,—where in the surf they lay,
A seaman and his son,—and knew them not.

28

—Then Nature, like the deep sea, closed o'er all,—
Souls, passions, little lives : no bead of air,
No ripple :—as yestreen, the vale was fair
Next day, next century : nor does aught recall
What in old time was loved and suffer'd there.

29

Her's was the last word ; and the landscape took
The impassive shadow of her quiet sway.
Still round the vale the mountains keep their gray
Long watch, above the mere and arrowy brook,
And the free herds in their lone pastures stray.

30

She has resumed her own ; and there is rest.
All trace of what was once has now gone by ;
Save where the cottage-gable, bare and high,
Poor forlorn mimic of the mountain crest,
Cuts its gray slope against the calm clear sky.

ALCESTIS

ARGUMENT

Admetus, son of Pherés and Clymené, and King of Pherae in Thessaly, has married Alcestis, daughter to Pelias and Anaxibia of Iolkos, a city on the stream Anauros under Mount Pelion, at the head of the gulf of Pagasa. Admetus is claimed by the Fates for early death, unless one of his family will die for him, according to the terms obtained at his marriage by Apollo. His parents refuse; whereupon Alcestis dies for him. But Persephoné-Kora, Queen of the world below, moved by the self-sacrifice of Alcestis, restores her to life.

Another version describes her as recovered from Death by Herakles. The intervention of Persephoné appearing to be the older and nobler form of the myth (although against the authority of *Euripides*), has been here preferred. It is not known how this point was dealt with in the *Admetus* of *Sophocles*.

I

‘Twelve years have gone, twelve happy, happy years,
 Since I, the Queen, on lion-harness’d car,
 From Pelias’ house was by Admetus brought;
 Who with his wife so graciously has wrought
 That my own girlhood seems already far:

2

‘But comes again in this my maiden child,
 And this bright son, high Pherae’s future king.

Why then, when all things are of gladsomeness,
Crouch ye with ashes crown'd and ashy dress?

What weight of silent sadness do ye bring?

3

'We have been happy: but the gods, I know,
Love in their might to stain man's happiness,
Clouding with wormwood drops the wine of life.
With what dumb message then your lips are rife
Speak; Joy, not pain, is by delay made less.'

4

To whom the spokesman of the household throng:—

'O Queen, O worship of Thessalian eyes
Since, clothed in morning's gifts, divinely fair,
Thou cam'st; we know how thou wilt greatly bear
What thou wilt greatly hear without disguise.

5

'Men bid some drape themselves before they fall:
But thou art ever equal to thy fate,
Robed in all seemliness, lady complete.
So thus our woe we lay before thy feet,
And how thou may'st redeem the ruin'd state.

6

‘Against thy lord the blue-eyed lord of Death
His glance has set : nor is there any aid
By which the head of Thessaly should live
Save this ; that of the household one should give
A life for his, unbought and unafraid.

7

‘For when Admetus from Iolkos fair
In that strange car, across the meadows green,
First brought thee, in thy wedding-rites the name
Of Artemis, forgotten, wrought her shame ;
And by the genial couch the indignant Queen

8

‘Coil’d a foul ring of snakes, and on his head
Sign’d a prophetic sign of early death.
But, for the love he bore Admetus young,
Apollo from the Fates this promise wrung,
That they would take such ransom for his breath.

9

‘Now, therefore, think what may be done.’

Thus they :

But she bow’d down her head, and spoke no word,

Drawing her children closer to the knee ;
Nor check'd the silver current of their glee.
Nor by their hands' petitioning was stirr'd.

10

And as the waters o'er some drowning head
Close, in green mist, and press upon the life,
And in one flash all that the man has been
Starts out, as mountain-tracts by lightning seen,
And he sinks flat, and quits an idle strife :—

11

So her young days upon her soul came back :—
Iolkos : the white walls : the purple crest
Of Pelion hung above them, whence a cry
Of clanging eagles vex'd the summer sky,
And loosen'd crags scarr'd the dark mountain
breast :—

12

And how Apollo o'er the purple crest
Came with the morn, and sent his golden beam
Slant on the dancing waves : and how she fear'd,
That day, when by the eclipse his locks were shear'd,
Until the God shot forth a sword-like gleam :—

13

She heard the crystal ripplings of the brook
That first allured her baby feet to try
Its mountain coolness, till she reach'd the sea,
And the warm waves came laughing o'er her knee,
Kissing the fair child oft and amorously :—

14

And how o'er all that inland ocean, barr'd
From Aphetæ to Olízon, the great hill
Flung his green shadow, and the sea-nymphs play'd,
And call'd her to their revel, undismay'd :—
Then, with what subterfuge of maiden skill

15

When first Admetus to Iolkos came,
She veil'd the traitor trembling, that proclaim'd
Love and Love's lord ; and how she look'd her heart,
And Anaxibia took her daughter's part,
And the strange chariot bore her, unashamed,

16

Over the meadows green, by Pagasæ,
And the corn reddening on the Dotian plain,

And the blue cornflowers loose amid the corn,
And the lark scattering in the crystal morn
His unremittent gush of silver rain :

17

And how the watchful eyes of her young lord
Flash'd, when at hand the tall white towers they
know
Of Pherae : and the sweetness of the way :
And how great Ossa north in shadow lay
Like the foreboding of a coming woe,

18

But distant : and, ' O Gods, avert it now
From him and these,' she cried, ' if not from me ;
Through love of whom, forgetful, on his head
He brought this summons to the youthful dead.'
—Then a touch woke her from that reverie,

19

And the King stood at height and fronted her :
And the sad secret of each other's eyes
Each read, and in the breathing of a breath
Each heart devour'd the bitterness of death,
And knew itself and saw without disguise.

20

Then she, the last faint hope to end at once,—

For life is sweet, and little faces plead

For mother's love, and anchor her to life,—

'Pherés or Clymené,' whisper'd, 'or thy wife'?

But he, her latter accents without heed

21

Hearing, and hearing not, in deaf despair,

Cried 'O my father and my mother! old

In years, but not in honour, who could choose

Their dregs of life, the days that none can use

Nor glory in, nor aught of joy behold,

22

'Before the younger life, that they had borne:

And hand their son to death before his due,

And lay the head of Thessaly in dust,

And leave these, orphans, with a dull *we must*;

Life is so sweet; the grave so near in view!

23

'Parents! Not parents! I abjure the name:

Those ne'er begot, or they had loved me more,

Me, and the land, and gods of Thessaly,
And Hellen our first ancestor, and thee,
And those whom in the couch thy peril bore.

24

‘They should have ta’en the tatter of their days
And with it pieced my purple robe of youth :
Keeping for me the word Apollo gave,
When in my house he earn’d his bread, a slave.
Won from the stern Fates by celestial ruth.

25

‘As the young larch-plant upon Pelion’s side
Lifts his green spire and goes on high with joy,
They should have let me live the life of man :
But now to the dark house and shadows wan,
Where wit is vain and strength has no employ.

26

‘(Save through one sacrifice that may not be)
I go.’
Then she, with prayerful earnest eyes,
Her incense offering on the altar threw ;
Which hiss’d into white wreaths, and pass’d from view.
‘And such,’ she said, ‘the law of sacrifice.

27

‘We do not what we see, but what we know :

Whither ascend our prayer and gift, is hid :
And who his life lays down at their command,
Following the motion of a hidden hand,
Him the just gods to their high banquet bid.

28

‘Yet life is sweet, and sweet to see the sun,
And love is sweet, and sight of these, and thee :
To clasp the little limbs, the pure, the fine,
To kiss them o’er and o’er and call them *mine*,
And dress and dance the darlings on the knee:

29

‘To scan the blue depth of the stainless eyes ;
The wonder of the waxing frame to see ;
To watch the unconscious words take form and life ;
The wayward fancies of the future wife,
The young assertion of the man to be.

30

‘Ah, yet it must be ! Love ! and I submit.
Which is more precious, few or many years ?

For what is most so, to the gods we give.
And few the hours thy parents have to live :
Their thread already straight between the shears.

31

‘So let them move the last faint steps in peace
Down the long avenue of well-spent days.
But thou—it must not be that thou should’st die !
Thessalia’s shining head ; the people’s eye ;
’Twixt gods and men throned in a middle place.

32

‘He too will need the pillar of the house,
This gallant boy, high Pherae’s future king ;
And this fair girl, whom one I ne’er shall see
Will come with gifts and prayers to claim of thee,
And in her eyes a daughter’s tears will spring :

33

‘And she will think of one who is no more,
Nor thinks of her nor thee nor anything,
Going with downcast eyes and captive tread
Through the dim garden of the happy dead,
Where summer never comes, nor voice of spring,

34

‘Nor frost nor sun; but the dim rose-red glow
Of autumn dyes the insuperable hill:
Nor past nor future are, nor wish nor vow;
But the white silence of the eternal Now
Wipes out the thought of joy, and fear of ill:

35

‘The realm of the dread Maid, Deméter’s child,
Who gathers all, and gives none back again:
—And she is here! and I am not!—farewell’ :—
Then on the altar steps gently she fell;
And, as a snow-wreath touch’d by April’s rain,

36

The pure into the unseen, death-dissolved,
Melted inaudibly.

Then Admetus knelt,
And kiss’d the hands, first chill’d in ebbing life,
And veil’d his eyes before the vanish’d wife :—
And through the land the shock of sorrow felt

37

Trembled in one long groan and Titan cry:
And the Sun cloak’d himself in wan eclipse

And through the streets they ran with flying hair,
Disfeatured in their grief: but she lay there,
Nor changed the beauty of the perfect lips.

38

Then her son came, and look'd upon her face
Crying 'O Queen, thrice-honour'd in thy fate!
Thou hast done well, mother, in dying thus;
Thou hast done well: but who will comfort us?
O mother, thou hast left us desolate!

39

'Ay me, for golden hours with thee have fled:
What summer converse by the fragrant pine;
What evening silences of mere delight,
While zenith moonbeams bathed the terrace white;
What ruby sunsets 'neath the jocund vine!'

40

Also her daughter, from the altar-top
Strewing her golden hair with ashes hoar,
'Fair in thy life, and fairer in thy death!
But who will stay me when Love takes my breath,
Or give me courage in my child-bed sore?

41

‘And how, my father, will it be with thee,
When on the throne thou art in golden state,
And hast not her who at thy side did stand,
Missing the accustom’d voice and smile and hand :—
O mother, thou hast left us desolate !’

42

But the King veil’d his face, and knelt apart,
Being weigh’d down with thought of what had been;
The wedding chamber and the serpents’ hiss ;
The genial hour that made Alcestis his ;
The gleaming ocean and the meadows green :

43

And the first smile, the oft rememberéd,
When to Iolkos in bright youth he came,
And she behind a column of the hall
Blush’d like the full-ripe apple ere it fall,
And bow’d her face ashamed for that sweet shame.

44

—O Life, ill-balanced in its restlessness !
That from the days of youth looks on to age,

And from the hoary years thinks boyhood bliss,
Nor learns that only when it is, it is,
Nor in the present finds its heritage !

45

O prized so little when with us thou wast,
What golden haze breathes out from thee afar,
What spell transfiguring the lost hours of youth ?
What gracious glamour hides the better truth,
As the heart wills, not as the blood, we are ?

46

—As he who whilst the side-long vase ran clear,
Dream'd down whole years in fancy : so the King
From manhood to old age went in one day
Immeasurably long, as there he lay,
And knew each several moment by its sting.

47

But when the people round him murmur'd, *Time !*
'Time is enough,' he cried, 'if Time mean Death.'
Then a far voice came on his inward ear,
'Thou hast thy wish, Admetus : I am here' :—
And he look'd up, and drew a passionate breath :

48

And at his side, lo! the dread Maid, divine
Persephoné, crown'd with harvest's golden ear,
And eyes too dreadful to be look'd upon.
And by her stands the gracious form of one
Only the less divine, as less austere,

49

Clad in bright bridal robe, and bridal veil :
And, as the presence of the Gods divine
Opens the eye of man and sharpens, he
Knew her at once, though veil'd, crying ' 'Tis she !'
And clasp'd her hand, and once again said ' Mine,

50

' My one of all the world ! my all in one !
Whence art thou come and how deliver'd, say,
Alcestis . . . if my own Alcestis . . . tell !'
—But she stood silent :—and a terror fell,
As when a sudden spectre at mid-day

51

Meets us, and we at first have thought it man.
—Then, last, the maiden Queen, Persephoné :

‘I, it was, I, quelling the lord of death,
Restored Alcestis to warm human breath :
I only : doubt not : touch her : it is she.

52

‘She, the young worship of thy youthful days,
The changeless pole-star of thy shifting life ;
She, who was all, and gave up all to thee ;
Honour’d above all women that shall be ;
’Mongst all perfections the most perfect wife.

53

A wealth of gifts God grants the race of man,
And each gift has its own peculiar price ;
Strength, courage, wisdom, love, and loveliness :
Yet one the smiles of God supremely bless ;—
The heroic beauty of self-sacrifice.

54

‘O weak who stand in fancied strength alone !
Strong but when brothers’ hands are held in
brothers’ !
The Fates at Fame’s far-shining trophies laugh :—
What glories equal that plain epitaph
Not for himself was his first thought, but others ?

55

‘To lose oneself for one more dear than self!
For others’ love one’s own love to lay down!
O privilege that the Gods might envy men,
As o’er the flawless walls of heaven they lean,
And watch a mortal win a nobler crown!

56

‘Look on her! touch her! hold thy very own!
As the new life its red rose o’er her flings;
Yet life not wholly what she knew before:
These tender feet have tried the further shore,
These lips the savour of celestial things.

57

‘Henceforth, live worthy of one such as this!
But now, three mornings’ sacrifice prepare,
Ere she resumes her gracious human ways:—
To walk together many perfect days,
Until together my repose ye share.’

A MAIDEN'S PRAYERS

I

Leave the flower alone,
In the maidens' place
From her childhood grown !
Leave the flower alone
In her maiden grace.

She is but a child
With a childish smile ;
Meadow-sweet and wild ;
She is but a child !
Leave her yet awhile.

Artemis my Queen
Guard and grace thy flower ;
Bend with arrows keen
O'er the maidens' bower,
Artemis my Queen !

II

Aphrodité Queen

Take thy suppliant's part

In the lonesome hour ;

With thy hand of power

Staunch the bleeding heart,

Aphrodité Queen.

Come as once thou cam'st

To the Lesbian maid ;

Quit thy daedal throne,

Clasp thy wonder-zone,

In thy smile array'd

Come as once thou cam'st.

Aphrodité, Queen

Of the tell-tale eye,

Of the brimming heart,

Take thy votary's part,

Take me, or I die,

Aphrodité Queen !

*A STORY OF NAPLES:**ANCIEN RÉGIME*

I

Against the long quays of Naples
The long waves heave and sink,
And blaze in emerald showers,
And melt in pearls on the brink.

2

But as towards Pausilippo
By Margellina we go,
The crimson breath of the mountain
Makes blood in the ripples below.

3

A stone lies there in the pavement,
With a square cut into the stone ;
And our feet will carelessly cross it
Like a thousand more, and pass on.

4

But one clothed in widow's clothing
Like a veil'd Vestal stands,
And from that slab in the pavement
Warns with imperious hands.

5

Smiling the sentinels watch us ;
A smile and a sneer in one ;
And that lordly woman bends her,
And wipes the dust from the stone.

6

'What secret is in that service
Which she does like a thing divine?
Why guards she the stone from footsteps,
Like a priestess guarding a shrine?'

7

As a wild thing stabb'd by the hunters
She turn'd on us quickly and rose ;
'O ye who pass and behold me,
Why ask ye my grief of foes?'

8

'It is enough to have borne them :
It is enough to have lost :
My sons ! My fair fair children !
Silence beseemeth most.

9

'Nor any woe like my woe
Since the Just One was crucified,
And his Mother stood and beheld him,
And could not die when he died.'

10

With that again she bow'd her,
And levell'd her head with the stone.
And in the high noon silence
We heard the mountain groan.

11

As whom a magic circle
Traced round holds prisoner,
We stood and watch'd her kneeling,
And could not speak nor stir.

12

Then from her feet unbended
She slowly rose to her height,
Through the worn robe appearing
Like a queen in her own despite.

13

She knotted her hands behind her
In a knot of bloodless gray,
As if so her lips unaided
Alone her story should say.

14

Like the keen thrilling music
Blown from a tongue of flame,
Through her lips that whisper'd story
With a thin clear calmness came.

15

'In this square of dust-choked socket
A beam was set last year ;
And the scaffold shot forth above it
The gliding axe to rear.

16

‘With gaunt grim poles in order.
As when men a palace build:—
’Tis the house of King Death, this palace!
With headsmen for courtiers fill’d.

17

‘I come at day-break often,
And call it up in my brain:
I see the steel uplifted;
I see it fall again.

18

‘Sirs, ’twas a morn like this morn.
So white and lucid and still;
Only the scowl of thunder
Sat on the face of the hill.

19

‘The steel like the star of morning
Hung silver-glittering on high:—
It fell like the star of morning
By God’s hand struck from the sky.

20

‘It rose with a gleam of crimson,
And sank again as it rose:—
And I stood here as one standing
To watch the death of his foes.

21

‘And your eyes may well look wonder
That mine look’d on that thing of hell!
And unask’d ye know already
Who died when lead-like it fell.

22

‘Yes! They were fair as the morning,
Those two young sons of my youth;
Stamp’d with the stamp of Nature
From boyhood soldiers of truth.

23

‘Soldiers of truth and of Italy;
Her blood was quick in their veins,
As they writhed ’neath the lies that bound them,
The canker-poisonous chains.

24

‘The coarse-lipp’d Austrian tyrant
Our serf-kings holding in pay,
Keeps Italy weak and sunder’d,
For the greater ease of his sway.

25

‘In the farce they name our country
A boot towards Africa thrust :
’Tis a boot with an iron heel, then,
To tread her own self in the dust.

26

‘The priest-king haunts in the centre
The eternal ruin of Rome ;
The German tramples the Lombard ;
And here,—is the Bourbon home.

27

‘They saw these things, my fair ones !
The beauty, the curse, and the woe :
The beauty that seems of heaven ;
The curse, pit-black from below.

28

‘O Italy, mother of nations
Like her own fair sea-nymph’s brood,
Who turn and rend their mother,—
Children by name, not blood !

29

‘A dubious intricate quarrel
Broke from the court of the North ;
And on some mission of order
From Trent the columns push’d forth.

30

‘They came down by Garigliano ;
At Teano their halt they call’d,
When the pomegranates were as carbuncles,
And the stream-pools as emerald.

31

‘A cry went up from our people,
Volunteering by fifties to go ;
And the king must come forth and lead them
Against his ally the foe.

D

32

‘E’en in the palace recesses
The gold-laced conscience was stirr’d ;—
But the calmer confessor-wisdom
In season whisper’d a word.

33

‘Sirs, from your land of freedom
Ye cannot fathom our land !
—They march out by Pausilippo
That flame-faced patriot band.

34

‘The second son of a second
Cousin of the blood at their head ;
—Our gay volunteers to conquest
O ! they were right royally led !

35

‘But what, think you, was the conquest
To which they were march’d along,
And the deep rich oily *Tc Deum*
By the barytone canon sung ?

36

‘—Where the road turns under Teano,
Half behind the pomegranate close,
Red faced and stalwart-fashion’d,
Point-blank they came on their foes.

37

‘Who should hold back the lions
When the prey to their hands is given?
Each poised his musket and shouted
As if at the sight of Heaven.

38

‘And when that royal field-marshal
With a *Halt!* fell back to the rear,
Who could rein-in their onset,
Or sever prudence from fear?

39

‘Or care how the royal columns
Ebb’d slowly behind away,
While the best young blood of the city
Unaided rush’d to the fray?

40

' Ah ! thrice-bless'd who fell forward
Before the Tyrolean gun,
And gasp'd out their life in crimson,
Beneath the crimson sun !

41

' O that I must live to say it,
And live to say it in vain—
My sons ! My own two fair ones !
Better had ye been slain.

42

' I saw them go forth at morning ;
I saw them not at night :
And yet they return'd to the city
As captives captured in flight.

43

' Sirs, the gold-laced thing in the palace
With a bestial instinct dim
Knew that the soldiers of freedom
Must be foes in heart to him.

44

‘ I said, the ways of the Bourbon
Ye could not understand !
—They were carted hither as rebels
For a broken word of command.

45

‘ They had gone onward as lions
When Royalty mutter’d *Withdraw* :
And their lives at once lay forfeit
At the lawless feet of the law.

46

‘ In the black Castel del Uovo
They lodged them side by side ;
And between them,—a Tyrolese soldier
For order and peace to provide.

47

‘ That square above is the window,
Notch’d on the white wall stone ;’—
We look’d ; and again in the silence
We heard the mountain groan.

48

‘Sirs, for this king my husband
In youth laid his own life down !
And I prayed their lives might be spared me,
Their palace pass to the crown.

49

‘How should I do but ask it?
—Yet better not to have ask’d,
Had I seen ’neath a face of mercy
Hell’s particular malice mask’d.

50

‘Ye have heard how between two mothers
King Solomon judged of old :—
But how between her two children
Could a mother such judgment hold ?

51

‘One life, they said, was given me ;
And I was to choose the one :
—The message came at even,
And I sat till the night was done :—

52

‘And I know not how they went by me,
The long long day and the night;
Only within my forehead
Was a burning spot of light:—

53

‘And a cry *My brother! my brother!*
Why art thou taken from me?
O choice unjust and cruel!
Would that I had died for thee!

54

‘I could not answer the message;
I could not think nor pray:
Only I saw within me
That burning spot alway.

55

‘Poison and glare together,
Like the wormwood star of Saint John,
It sat within my temples,
Throbbing and smouldering on.

56

'Then once with odour and freshness
As of fields in summer rain,
The vision of their sweet childhood
Was borne on my aching brain.

57

'Bent over one book together
I saw the fair heads of the twain;
And they read how in Roman battle
Brother by brother was slain.

58

'And their heads are closer together,
Their hands clasp o'er and o'er,
As they swear that death the divider
Shall only unite them more.

59

'—Toll! toll! and again!
A bell broke forth in the air:
And I look'd out on the morning;
And the morning was still and fair.

60

‘A black flag hung from the castle,
Where the thin bare flagstaff stands.
And I thought to go up to the castle,
With that bitter choice in my hands.

61

‘A timid crowd was pressing
And bore me along the street;
And I saw the tall scaffold standing
Upon these flags at our feet.

62

‘I saw the steel descending
As a star runs down from the sky:—
—Why should I tell the story?
Ye know it as well as I!

63

‘—The axe took both as I waver’d
Upon that choice accursed!
Now am I wholly childless—
I know not which is worst.

64

‘My sons! My fair fair children!
I know not where they lie:—
Only I know that together
They died,—and I could not die.’

65

—A fork of flame from Vesuvius
Through his black cone went on high;
And a cloud branch’d out like a pine-tree
With thunders throned in the sky.

66

The crimson breath of the mountain
Made blood in the ripples below:—
But she stood gray as marble,
In Niobe’s woe:—

67

And like a Roman matron
O’er her face she folded the veil,
With a more fix’d composure
Than we who heard her tale.

Book Second



A SONG OF LIFE

'Tis the same sun and stars, my Love,

That o'er our parents shone

Through the brief beauty of their day,

And when we also are as they

Will yet shine on, shine on :—

Then mid the roses let us sing,

As mid the roses they did ;

For life will bring no second spring

When summer once is faded.

'Tis the same sun and stars, my Love,

That saw their childish glee ;

And rising still, and setting still,

So smiling, and so shouting, will

Their children's children see :—

Then mid the roses let us sing,

As mid the roses they did ;

For life will bring no second spring

When summer once is faded.

'Tis the same sun and stars, my Love,
That saw them, worn and gray,
Smile bright and brave on instant Death;
—And who, that breathes our human breath,
Would bear to live for aye?
—Then mid the roses let us sing,
As mid the roses they did;
For life will bring no second spring
When summer once is faded.

EUGENIA

What pearl of price within her lay
I could not know when first I met her
So little studious for herself,
Almost she ask'd we should forget her :
As the rose-heart at prime of dawn,
Herself within herself withdrawn :
And yet we felt that something there
Was fairer than the fairest fair.

I mark'd her goings through the day,
Intent upon her maiden mission :
The manners moulded on the mind ;
The flawless sense, the sweet decision :
So gracious to the hands she task'd,
She seem'd to do the thing she ask'd :
And then I knew that something there
Was fairer than the fairest fair.

Her eyes spoke peace; and voice and step
The message of her eyes repeated ;

Truth halo-bright about her brows,

And Faith on the fair forehead seated :—
And lips where Candour holds his throne,
And sense and sweetness are at one :
I look and look ; and something there
Is fairer than the fairest fair.

As some still upward-gazing lake

Round which the mountain-rampart closes,
Crystalline bright and diamond pure,
In azure depth of peace reposes ;
And Heaven comes down with all its grace
To find itself within her face ;
And the heart owns that something there
Is fairer than the fairest fair.

‘ O just and faithful child of God !

Thrice happy he,’ I cried, ‘ who by her
Finds in her eyes the home of home,
Reads in her smile his heart’s desire ;
The smile of beauty from above,
Of equable and perfect love !’
——I sigh’d—she smiled ; and something there
Was fairer than the fairest fair.

REINE D'AMOUR

Close as the stars along the sky
 The flowers were in the mead,
 The purple heart, and golden eye,
 And crimson-flaming weed :—
 And each one sigh'd as 'I went by,
 And touch'd my garment green,
 And bade me wear her on my heart
 And take her for my Queen
 Of Love,—
 And take her for my Queen.

And one in virgin white was drest
 With lowly gracious head ;
 And one unveil'd a burning breast
 With Love's own ardour red :

All rainbow bright, with laughter light,
They flicker'd o'er the green,
Each whispering I should pluck her there
And take her as my Queen
Of Love,—
And take her as my Queen.

But sudden at my feet look'd up
A little star-like thing,
Pure odour in pure perfect cup,
That made my bosom sing.
'Twas not for size, nor gorgeous dyes,
But her own self, I ween,
Her own sweet self, that bade me stoop
And take her for my Queen
Of Love,—
And take her for my Queen.

Now all day long and every day
Her beauty on me grows,
And holds with stronger sweeter sway
Than lily or than rose ;

And this one 'star outshines by far

All in the meadow green;—

And so I wear her on my heart

And take her for my Queen

Of Love,—

And take her for my Queen.

NOW AND EVER

Ask what you will, my own and only Love ;
 For, to love's service true,
 Your least wish sways me as from worlds above,
 And I yield all to you,
 Who are the only She,
 And in one girl all womanhood to me.

—Yet some things e'en to thee I cannot yield !
 As that one gift, by which
 On the still morning in the wood-side field.
 Thou mad'st existence rich,
 Who wast the only She,
 And in one girl all womanhood to me.

We had talk'd long ; and then a silence came ;
 And in the topmost firs

To his nest the white dove floated like a flame :
And my lips closed on hers
Who was the only She,
And in one girl all womanhood to me.

Since when my heart lies by her heart,—nor now
Could I 'twixt hers and mine,
Nor the most love-skill'd Angel, choose ;—So thou
In vain would'st ask for thine !
—Who art the only She,
And, in one girl, all womanhood to me.

—

LOVE'S LANGUAGE

Their little language the children
Have, on the knee as they sit ;
And only those who love them
Can find the key to it.

The words thereof and the grammar
Perplex the logician's art ;
But the heart goes straight with the meaning,
And the meaning is clear to the heart.

So thou, my Love, hast a language
That, in little, says all to me :—
But the world cannot guess the sweetness
Which is hidden with Love and thee.

THE IRRECOVERABLE

Eugenia, ere our favourite field
 Gave us its beauty first to view,
 Think of the thousand days that went
 Before the charm we knew,
 Or dream'd how much of joy the path might yield!

This tender slope of constant green,—
 This sea, that, deepening through the trees,
 Shows like a sky beneath the sky,—
 This home of utter peace
 Lay patient in its grace, untrod, unseen.

Yet when we felt the green recess
 Our souls with its calm beauty seize,
 At once it spoke itself our own ;
 While in the heart of peace
 A peace more deep disclosed ~~is~~ blissfulness.

—Eugenia ! Mine at last ! my own !
Home of the peace earth cannot give
In her most perfect perfectness !

What fate was mine to live
Those many years of Paradise unknown ?

As music sleeping in the strings
Till by a touch awaken'd, lay
The blessedness of life with thee ;
And day died after day
In hopeless chase of vain imaginings.

And if at last the favourite scene
Gave its green beauty to the view,—
And if at last I clasp'd thee mine,—
Yet can I not subdue
The sigh for what was not, yet might have been.

It is the mystery of our lot :—
Though past Hope's inmost hoping rich,
E'en in Love's very heart, to weep
The years of dearth, through which
We might have been blest, and we knew it not.

A SONG OF THE YEARS

Thou art mine for ever, dearest, thou art mine for
ever,

Since that hour when in the meadow we two sat
together ;

Long ago, ah ! not so long,—all in the meadow
lonely,

Thou by me and I by thee, my one true-love, my
only.

Tenderly and truly, dearest, tenderly and truly

We two loved each other then, though each then
loved but newly :

Only then we knew not what we now know well
and dearly :

But has love with knowledge grown, does nearness
bind more nearly ?

Ah ! that young devotion, though to memory fair
and tender,

To the love of many years its beauty must
surrender :—

By the pangs and tears, the smiles and sweetness
known together,

Thou art mine for ever, dearest, thou art mine for
ever.

A SONG OF SPRING AND AUTUMN

In the season of white wild roses
We two went hand in hand :
But now in the ruddy autumn
Together already we stand.

O pale pearl-necklace that wander'd
O'er the white-thorn's tangled head !
The white-thorn is turn'd to russet,
The pearls to purple and red !

On the topmost orchard branches
It then was crimson and snow ;
Where now the gold-red apples
Burn on the turf below.

And between the trees the children
In and out run hand in hand ;
And, with smiles that answer their smiling,
We two together stand.

EUTOPIA

There is a garden where lilies
And roses are side by side ;
And all day between them in silence
The silken butterflies glide.

I may not enter the garden,
Though I know the road thereto ;
And morn by morn to the gateway
I see the children go.

They bring back light on their faces ;
But they cannot bring back to me
What the lilies say to the roses,
Or the songs of the butterflies be.

THE HEREAFTER

Sigh not, fair Mother, as thou seest
 The little nursery at thy feet;
 Three golden heads together bent
 Like statesmen o'er some scheme profound and sweet
 Convened in their more gracious Parliament.

Sigh not, if o'er thy faithful heart
 Keen shadows of the future go;
 The tortures dormant in the frame;
 The woes of want and wrong; the sterner woe
 Of souls that start, and own a hidden shame.

Fenced from the frosty gales of ill
 Man slips through life unmade, unbraced:—
 As honey from the flint-rock shed
 Wrong bravely borne, the brunt of pain well faced,
 Rain in soft blessings on the gallant head.

Endure ! Endure !—Life's lesson so
Is written large in sea and earth :
And He who gives us wider scope
Than the dumb things that struggle from their birth.
Sets in our sky a star of higher hope.

And with more joy than one who treads
The road with never-swerving strength,
His future-piercing eyes survey
Those who, wide-roving, to the fold at length
Trace with thorn-redden'd feet their final way.

—Then sigh not, if the smiling band
Their unforethoughtful brightness keep,
And garner sunbeams for the day
When those dear stainless eyes may yearn to weep
The natural drops that cannot force their way.

He who has made us, and foresees
Our tears, to thy too-anxious gaze
The long Hereafter gently spares :—
Only his Love shines forth, through all their days
Pledged to the children of so many prayers.

TO A CHILD

If by any device or knowledge
The rosebud its beauty could know,
It would stay a rosebud for ever,
Nor into its fulness grow.

And if thou could'st know thy own sweetness,
O little one, perfect and sweet!
Thou would'st be child for ever;
Completer whilst incomplete.

SPRING

First-Spring walks in the woods,
Sits as king in the valleys :
Cowslip-crown'd-and-anemone,
Starr'd with white lilies.

Burns on level and upland,
Miles of meadowy splendour :
Breathes his haze on the orchard,
Rosily tender.

Sweet Spring that in the blackbird
Speakest, and in the thrushes,
And e'en on the life-lorn hillside
Com'st to the bushes :

In this fulness of love
Why had thou left me lonely?
Touch me with life, sweet Spring,
Me, me only.

THRENOS

Star-crown'd citadels, golden isles in a violet sea,
 Heart-stir and music of Hope, the gleam of a glory
 to be :

Dreams and devotions of youth!—but youth has
 departed.

O the exultation and spirit of vague desire!
 Tremblings of liquid dawn; horizons of lucid fire!
 Something we gain with age: but youth has departed.

River and race and game, gay leaping of brook and
 hedge :

Peril on happy heights, and pleasure nearest the
 edge :

Something we gain as we live: but youth has
 departed.

Fairest of fair ones, seen or unseen, yet always mine :
Thine was my waking and dreaming, all joy and all
sorrow thine :

The real has come as we live ; but the vision
departed.

Yes, the real is better ;—and yet the vision was
best !

Having nothing, and yet, by faith, of all things
possess'd :

Both we ought to have kept : but youth has departed.

Faces we could not see too much : the heart on
the lip :

Feet that might stray and stumble ; but friendship
that could not trip :

Wisdom may come : but the faces of youth have
departed.

Yes, the music I hear of the future, comes flaunting
and fast ;

Cold and tuneless it sounds before the cry of the
past :

Voices and friends of youth, why have ye departed?

—Little voices, I hear them, the old old chase
pursuing;

In the happy children the world its childhood
renewing:

We see your day, and are glad: but youth has
departed.

Little ones, in your eyes the dawn is lucid and
gray;

Rosy-finger'd ye come, and golden-hair'd as the day;

Come, and with you bring him, the mourn'd, the
departed.

PAST AND PRESENT

As I hear the breath of the mother
To the breath of the child at her feet
Answer in even whispers,
When night falls heavy and sweet:

Sleep puts out silent fingers,
And leads me back to the roar
Of the dead salt sea that vomits
Wrecks of the past ashore.

I see the lost Love in beauty
Go gliding over the main:
I feel the ancient sweetness,
The worm and the wormwood again.

Earth all one tomb lies round me,
Domed with an iron sky:
And *God himself in his power,*
God cannot save me! I cry.

With the cry I wake;—and around me
The mother and child at her feet
Breathe peace in even whispers;
And the night falls heavy and sweet.

THE LINNET IN NOVEMBER

Late singer of a sunless day,
I know not if with pain
Or pleasure more, I hear thy lay
Renew its vernal strain.

As gleams of youth, when youth is o'er,
And bare the summer bowers,
Thy song brings back the years of yore,
And unreturning hours.

So was it once ! So yet again
It never more will be !
Yet sing ; and lend us in thy strain
A moment's youth with thee !

THE GOLDEN LAND

O sweet September in the valley
 Carved through the green hills, sheer and straight,
 Where the tall trees crowd round and sally
 Down the slope sides, with stately gait
 And sylvan dance: and in the hollow
 Silver voices ripple and cry
 Follow, O follow!

Follow, O follow!—and we follow
 Where the white cottages star the slope,
 And the white smoke winds o'er the hollow,
 And the blythe air is quick with hope;
 Till the Sun whispers, O remember!
 You have but thirty days to run,
 O sweet September!

— O sweet September, where the valley
 Leans out wider and sunny and full,

And the red cliffs dip their feet and dally
 With the green billows, green and cool ;
And the green billows archly smiling,
 Kiss and cling to them, kiss and leave them,
 Bright and beguiling:—

Bright and beguiling, as She who glances
 Along the shore and the meadows along,
And sings for heart's delight, and dances
 Crown'd with apples, and ruddy, and strong :—
Can we see thee, and not remember
 Thy sun-brown cheek and hair sun-golden,
 O sweet September?

*IN THE VALLEY OF THE
GRANDE CHARTREUSE*

Torrent under lofty beeches, under larches cresting
high,

Wanderer by the wandering stranger slipping softly,
surely, by :

Born among Savoyan snows, and where Saint Bruno
hid with God,

Far from kindly human love, the road of tears and
rapture trod :

Joining then the valley-streamlet, then the golden-
green Isère,

Then, where Rhone's broad currents to the blue
their lordly burden bear :

— Torrent under lofty beeches, under larches cresting
high.

Thou art southward set, and southward all thy
waters strain and fly :—

Sunny South,—o'er slope and summit the gray mist
of olive spread ;

Terrace high o'er terrace climbing, lines of white,
vine-garlanded :

—Ah, another vision calls me, calls me to the
northern isle,

Voices from beyond the mountain : smiles that dim
the sun's own smile :

And I set my soul against thee, water of the
southern sea :

—Thine are not the currents toward the haven
where my heart would be.

MIDNIGHT AT GENEVA

The azure lake is argent now
 Beneath the pale moonshine :
 I seek a sign of hope in heaven :
 Fair Polestar ! thou art mine.

A thousand other beacons blaze :
 I follow thee alone
 Beyond the shadowy Jura range,
 The Jura, and the Rhone ;

Beyond the purpling vineyards trim
 Of sunny Clos Vougeot ;
 Beyond where Seine's brown waves beneath
 The Norman orchards go ;

Till, where the silver waters wash
 The white-wall'd northern isle,
 My heart outruns these laggart limbs
 To the long-sigh'd-for smile :

A NIGHT JOURNEY

A flash of steam, a dash of light
Through the black centre of the night,
With shriek and whirlwind goes the train
Across the slopes of sweet Touraine.

And o'er fair Europe's shadowy face
A hundred more their errand trace,
And Night surveys them, calm and free,
To her as little as to me.

But from that one of all that roll,
A vision lightens on the soul,
Where Love is on her way to bring
Love's sweetness to the sorrowing.

Through year-long hours of hope and woe
She sits and waits, till dawning show
The stately terraces that crown
The level waves of broad Garonne.

Her heart is gone before her there,
And sees the room and empty chair,
And one who on the death-bed lies,
And prays to see her ere she dies.

—O Love, that sits so white and still !
I think and think upon her, till
My heart is with her heart again,
Crossing the slopes of sweet Touraine.

A DEATH-BED

At length the gusts of anguish cease ;
The calm of coming death
Smiles from the eyes in settled peace,
Restores the rhythmic breath.

Such brightness now is round her cast,
Such joy for angels fit,
As if the gate of Heaven were past
Without her knowing it.

Like golden sands the moments go ;
Each, sparkling light with love,
Heaps up the nearing death below.
Steals from the life above.

O love that cannot be repair'd
Whate'er the future bring !
Irrevocable instants, spared
To plant the deeper sting !

O dread alternative of woe
At sight of one so dear !
We cannot bear that she should go,
Yet may not wish her here !

Ah yet the golden moments spare
That slip and sparkle thus !
The heavenly voices call her there ;
But she is more to us.

THE SISTERS

One sleeps where the Biscayan pines
Their changeless shadow shed :
The eternal green of English hills
Is round the sister's bed.

—O well the rustling pine-tree-tops
With the low lulling sea
May chaunt the litanies of peace
Life could not give to thee !

—And well for thee, the central warmth
And brightness of the hearth,
So lie by these familiar hills,
And in thy native earth.

Yet while our requiem thus we bring,

Ye are not where ye are ;

And on this cast-off heap of clay

Your spirits smile from far.

O sister souls ! the blue sea strives

To sunder you in vain :

In life, in death, your hearts were one ;

Now ye are one again.

THE THREE AGES

On the eve of the blessed birthday
The child in its cot is awake;
And thinks how the stars are raining
Sweet gifts for Christmas' sake.

On the eve of the marriage morrow
The bride is unquiet by night;
And the arrows of sunrise pierce her
With indefinite shy delight.

And Age lies sleepless and yearning
For child and mother afar;
But the light that shines on their faces
Is farther than sun or star.

—O broken arc and unmeaning,
Though the fragments are so sweet,
If the curve be not one hereafter,
And the circle of love complete!

BRECON BRIDGE

Low to himself beneath the sun
While soft his dusky waters run,
With ripple calm as infant's breath,
An ancient song Usk murmureth
By the bridge of Aberhonddu.

'Tis not of deeds of old, the song,
Llewellyn's fate, or Gwalia's wrong :
But how, while we have each our day
And then are not, he runs for aye.

He sees the baby dip its feet
Within his limpid waters sweet :
And hears when youth and passion speak
What strikes to flame the maiden's cheek.

Then, manhood's colours tamed to gray,
With his fair child the father gay:
And then Old Age, who creeps to view
The stream his feet in boyhood knew.

From days before the iron cry
Of Roman legions rent the sky,
Since man with wolf held brutish strife,
Usk sees the flow and ebb of life.

As mimic whirlpools on his face
Orb after orb, each other chase,
And gleam and intersect and die,
Our little circles eddy by.

But those fair waters run for aye
While to himself, *Wher'er they stray,*
All footsteps lead at last to Death,
His ancient song, Usk murmureth
By the bridge of Aberhonddu.

THE OLD YEAR

Into the dismal abysses
Where outworn centuries lie
Pass not, old Year, old Friend ;
Pass not, we pray thee, and die.

Now thou art bow'd and white-hair'd
We behold thee in truth what thou art ;
An arm'd man planted between us
And him of the bitter dart.

—There is gain from desire defeated,
And a gem in the heart of woe :
But to leave the little faces,
To leave the heart's darling, and go ;—

This is the sorest evil
Of evils under the sky,
That makes us chill at the noontide,
And shudder as night goes by.

—O King, whilst thou hast ruled us
We have murmur'd beneath our lot :
Now we know that under thy sceptre
We were safe, and we knew it not.

Minutes of fugitive pleasure,
Pearls in the year's diadem,—
Days of delight, all golden,
They are gone, and we sigh not for them :—

But thine heir, the new king, we know not ;
Nor whether his shield be of proof
To guard us against the arrows
Of that other who watches aloof,

With a smile from his ambush darting
The glance of a patient eye,
In wait to bear us to the darkness
Where Arthur and Alfred lie.

MARGARET WILSON

Four children at their little play
Across the iron-furrow'd way;
Joyous in all the joy of May.

Three, babies; and one, Margaret,
In charge upon the others set
To lift and soothe them if they fret.

The sky is blue; the sun is bright;
The little voices, pure and light,
Make music as they laugh outright.

The noiseless weight of giant wheels
Amongst them in a moment steals,
And death is rolling at their heels.

She ran with one to reach the side,
And reach'd it, and look'd back, and spied,
Where the dark wheels right towards them slide,

The other two, that were forgot,
Playing by Death, and knowing not ;—
And drew them to the narrow spot

Between the rails and platform-side,
Safe nestling down ;—but as they glide
The wheel-rods struck her, and she died.

By those she died for there she lay,
Nor any word could Margaret say,
But closed her eyes, and pass'd away.

—My little heroine ! though I ne'er
Can look upon thy features fair,
Nor kiss the lips that mangled were :

Too small a thing from Fame to have
A portion with the great and brave,
And unknown in thy lowly grave:

Yet thy true heart, and fearless faith,
And agony of love in death
God saw, and he remembereth.

*A VERY SIMPLE STORY**18th Jan.: 16th April, 1870*

‘Fifty years and more, Love,

We have been together :

Gone through frost and fire.

Tears and tearless weather.

Now the Master’s message

Bids our hands dis sever :

But will it be long, Love.

Ere they are together,

Together, Love !

Once again together ?’

Then she closed his eyelids,

Saying ‘Now and ever !’

Went about her household ;

‘Will he come ? O never !’

Till Death join'd the hands, that
Lately he bade sever.
Now two hearts united
Beat in one for ever;
For ever, Love!
One henceforth for ever.

THE DAYS LONG PAST

O days long past ! When night is deep
Ye oft wage war with holy sleep,
And to some spectral region far
Bear the sick soul your prisoner.

Before us in procession slow
The dim pathetic faces go,
Crying, 'Why scorn our weakness thus ?
Thy present soon will be like us !'

First-childhood, with pale gold around
His brows and wither'd ash-leaves bound,
And in his azure-faded eyes
The morning-star of Paradise.

First-faith, with rosy limbs, to whom
God every night was in the room,
And o'er our heads bade slumber creep
With touch of hands more soft than sleep.

First-love, with buoyant gestures still'd,
And eyes of promise unfulfill'd,
And trembling on his lips the while
The sunset of the ancient smile.

And other presences between,
And visions rather felt than seen,
With tears upon their garments' hem,
So dear, I may not look on them.

—Once more ! O once more !—But they go
Silent, nor any love-sign show.
I know the lost are lost ; and then
In gloomier gloom night falls again.

A SONG OF AGE

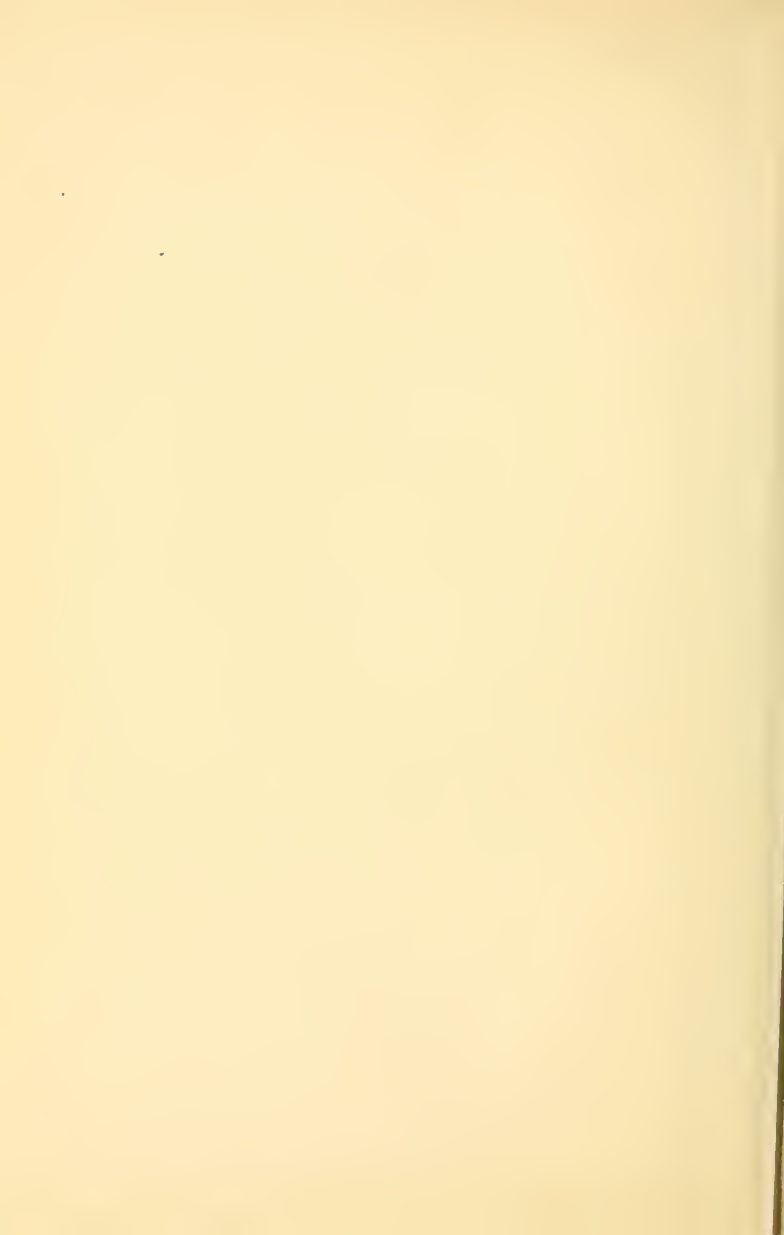
Summer is gone, and Autumn
Is red on the corn and heavy :
Yet skies are sweet and clear
As in the youthful year,
The forests full and leafy.
But in the Northern cloud
Sits Winter dark and rude,
And Summer's golden glory
Who will remember
In the long, long, dismal hours.
In the days of December ?

The morning hopes of childhood,
The visions pure and tender,
To the broader day of youth,
To the keen high light of truth
And reason we surrender :—

But as we touch the goal
Black winter numbs the soul,
And manhood's gleam of glory
Who will remember
In the long, long, dismal hours,
In the days of December?

Ah! were such life life only,
Better not be, than be thus!
To see through this brief day
Hope fall from hope away
And to blank Nothing leave us!
O still our vague unrest,
God's voice within the breast!
For in God's eternal Summer
Who will remember
The long, long, dismal hours,
And the days of December?

Book Third



THE ANCIENT AND MODERN MUSES

The monument outlasting bronze
Was promised well by bards of old ;
The lucid outline of their lay
Its sweet precision keeps for aye,
Fix'd in the ductile language-gold.

But we who work with smaller skill,
And less refined material mould,
—This close conglomerate English speech, .
Bequest of many tribes, that each
Brought here and wrought at from of old,

Residuum rough, eked out by rhyme
Barbarian ornament uncouth,—
Our hope is less to last through Art
Than deeper searching of the heart,
Than broader range of utter'd truth.

One keen-cut group, one deed or aim
Athenian Sophocles could show,
And rest content :—but Shakespeare's stage
Must hold the glass to every age,—
A thousand forms and passions glow

Upon the world-wide canvass. So
With larger scope our art we ply ;
And if the crown be harder won,
Diviner rays around it run,
With strains of fuller harmony.

SURSUM

On the gray granite spire
Alone with the sharp air, and glancing skies.
The callow bird unfilm'd his fervent eyes,
And, like a cry, sent a moist glance of fire
Onward and upward.

Too slight those untried wings
To buoy his soaring from the nest as yet :
But on the zenith sun his sight is set,
And miles above the earth his heart he flings.
Onward and upward.

His dizzy birthplace height
To the young eagle heart seems all too low
To swoop from, on the vale, where feeding go
Dim cattle-specks : his home is with the light.
Onward and upward.

Hour of heroic dreams !

—But when the day of might has come at length,
And the brown wings thrill with elastic strength,
Forth to the golden goal of youth he streams,
Onward and upward !

Then, without haste or stay,
Alone, unfriended, on that silent height,
Through the keen torrents of eye-searing light,
Through realms of blazing frost, he beats his way
Onward and upward.

And the great hills afar
Melt down beneath the clouds, one misty plain :
Whence, through the rift, with eyes that skyward strain,
The shepherd sees him moving like a star
Onward and upward.

TO A PAINTER

Friend, in whom ancient stems of note,
 The Mowbray and Fitzalan, meet,
 Who work'd their wills and held their own
 Since first the shatter'd English throne
 Gave the stern Norman surer seat ;

Wild days of castle-buttress'd crag,
 And long-roof'd abbey in the dell,
 Blue flash of steel-clad war, with gay
 Pennons toss'd foam-like o'er the fray,
 And woodland visionary cell,

And the fresh face of holy Art :—
 —Another task our times pursue

Than Europe in her youthful age !
Yet from the past our heritage
Descends ; we are not wholly new.

Nature and Man, two streams from one,
Feed us with knowledge ; and her powers
Pass into us, and brace the mind :
Yet most we owe to what our kind
Has done or thought in earlier hours ;

For heart to heart speaks closest, best.
Nor has man higher task than he
Who from old treasures flung away
Creates new beauty for to-day,
And heirlooms for the far to-be.

Then at thy noble function toil,
Thine own, not what the ancients tried ;
Let the pure form in clearness grow,
The happy tints contrasting glow,
Till all be fix'd and glorified.

A narrow field the men of old
With heaven's own hues and forms inlaid;
Their's, the strict end to teach the soul:
Our's, free from outward-set control,
To face all nature, unafraid.

That partial range of perfect skill
Enlarge to fit our wider aim,
And through the pleased eye touch the heart;
Scaling the hard-won heights of Art,
And adding honour to thy name.

PRO MORTUIS

What should a man desire to leave ?
 A flawless work ; a noble life :
 Some music harmonized from strife,
 Some finish'd thing, ere the slack hands at eve
 Drop, should be his to leave.

One gem of song, defying age ;
 A hard-won fight ; a well-work'd farm ;
 A law, no guile can twist to harm ;
 Some tale as our lost Thackeray's, bright, or sage
 As the just Hallam's page.

Or, in life's homeliest, meanest spot,
 With temperate step from year to year

To move within his little sphere,
 Leaving a pure name to be known, or not,—
 This is a true man's lot.

He dies: he leaves the deed or name,
 A gift for ever to his land,
 In trust to Friendship's prudent hand,
 Bound 'gainst all adverse shocks to guard his fame,
 Or to the world proclaim.

But the imperfect thing, or thought,—
 The crudities and yeast of youth,
 The dubious doubt, the twilight truth,
 The work that for the passing day was wrought,
 The schemes that came to nought,

The sketch half-way 'twixt verse and prose
 That mocks the finish'd picture true,
 The quarry whence the statue grew,
 The scaffolding 'neath which the palace rose,
 The vague abortive throes

And fever-fits of joy or gloom :—

In kind oblivion let them be !

Nor has the dead worse foe than he
Who rakes these sweepings of the artist's room,
And piles them on his tomb.

Ah, 'tis but little that the best,

Frail children of a fleeting hour,

Can leave of perfect fruit or flower !

Ah, let all else be graciously supprest

When man lies down to rest !

TWO GRAVES AT ROME

Saints and Caesars are here,
 Bishops of Rome and the world,
 Rulers by love and by fear :—
 Those who in purple and gold
 Prank'd and lorded it here ;
 Those who in sackcloth and shame
 Elected their limbs to enfold,
 Scornful of pleasure and fame :
 —Ah, they had their reward !
 There is something else that I seek
 On the flowery sward,
 By the pile of Cestius, here !

Is it but two stones like the rest
 Fondly preserving a name
 Elsewhere unheeded of fame,
 Set here by love, and left
 To gather gray, like the rest ?
 —Psha ! 'Tis the fate of man !

We are wretched, we are bereft
Of all that gave life its plan,
The sunbeam and treasure of yore ;
We lay it in earth, and are gone ;
 Then, as before,
We laugh and forget, like the rest.

A transient name on the stone,
A transient love in the heart ;
We have our day, and are gone :—
—But it is not so with these !
There is life and love in the stone ;—
Names of beauty and light
Over all lands and seas
They have gone forth in their might :
Warmer and higher beats
The general heart at the words
 Shelley and Keats :—
There is life and love in the stone !

He with the gleaming eyes
And glances gentle and wild,
The angel eternal child ;
His heart could not throb like ours,

He could not see with our eyes
Dimm'd with the dulness of earth,
Blind with the bondage of hours;
Yet none with diviner mirth
Hail'd what was noble and sweet:
The blood-track'd journey of life,
 The way-sore feet
None have watch'd with more human eyes.

And he who went first to the tomb—
Rejoice, great souls of the dead!
For none in that earlier Rome
Took a bolder and lordlier heart
To the all-receiving tomb:
No richer more equable eye,
No tongue of more musical art
Conversed with the Gods on high,
Among all the minstrels who made
Sweetness 'tween Etna and Alp:
 Nor was any laid
With such music and tears in the tomb.

—What seek ye, my comrades, at Rome?
To see and be seen at the gay

Meet on the Appian way,
Or within the tall palace at eve
To dance out your season at Rome?
To muse on the giants of old,
In the Forum at twilight to grieve?
It is more that these ruins enfold!
Warmer and higher beats
The Englishman's heart at the words,
 Shelley and Keats!
And here is the heart of our Rome.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

1845

Gentle and grave, in simple dress,
And features by keen mountain air
Moulded to solemn ruggedness,
The man we came to see sat there :
Not apt for speech, nor quickly stirr'd
Unless when heart to heart replied ;
A bearing equally removed
From vain display or sullen pride.

The sinewy frame yet spoke of one
Known to the hillsides : on his head
Some five-and-seventy winters gone
Their crown of perfect white had shed :—
As snow-tipp'd summits toward the sun
In calm of lonely radiance press,
Touch'd by the broadening light of death
With a serener pensiveness.

O crown of venerable age !
O brighter crown of well-spent years !
The bard, the patriot, and the sage,
The heart that never bow'd to fears !
That was an age of soaring souls ;
Yet none with a more liberal scope
Survey'd the sphere of human things ;
None with such manliness of hope.

Others, perchance, as keenly felt,
As musically sang as he ;
To Nature as devoutly knelt,
Or toil'd to serve humanity :
But none with those ethereal notes,
That star-like sweep of self-control ;
The insight into worlds unseen,
The lucid sanity of soul.

The fever of our fretful life,
The autumn poison of the air,
The soul with its own self at strife,
He saw and felt, but could not share :
With eye made clear by pureness, pierced
The life of Man and Nature through ;

And read the heart of common things,
Till new seem'd old, and old was new.

To his own self not always just,
Bound in the bonds that all men share,—
Confess the failings as we must,
The lion's mark is always there !
Nor any song so pure, so great,
Since his, who closed the sightless eyes,
Our Homer of the war in Heaven,
To wake in his own Paradise.

—O blaring trumpets of the world !
O glories, in their budding sere !
O flaunting roll of Fame unfurl'd !
Here was the king—the hero here !
It was a strength and joy for life
In that great presence once to be ;
That on the boy he gently smiled,
That those white hands were laid on me.

ELEGY

IN MEMORY OF PERCY, EIGHTH VISCOUNT
STRANGFORD:

Died 9th Jan., 1869, aged 43 years

One statesman the less,—one friend the poorer,—
While the year from its cradle comes lusty and gay;
In its strength and its youth we seem'd younger
and surer;
Death said 'Ye are mine!—lo, I call one:—obey!'

Could'st thou not take one ripe for the reaping,
Spare to our love the true-hearted and brave;
Lightning of insight, and brightness unsleeping;
Wit ne'er too trenchant, nor wisdom too grave?
Thirty years more, in our blindness we reckon'd,
This heart, all his graces and gifts, were our own:
One came between in a moment and beckon'd,
And he rose in silence and follow'd alone:—

Follow'd alone from the house where we knew him
Into the darkness that eye cannot trace:—
Thither the heart will oft strain and pursue him,
Glimpses and hints of a vanishing face.

Thirty years more, should the friends who deplore him
Meet, as in days without foresight or fear,
Vacant one place in our hearts will be for him,
One voice be listen'd for . . . Ah! he is here!
—Nevermore, O, nevermore!—and the gladness
Drops from our eyes and our voices away;
Hopes that are memories; smiles that are sadness;—
Love should be never, or be Love for aye!

Youth with his radiance leaves us, and slowly
Shadow-wing'd night hovers nearer above;
Light after light from our heaven fades wholly,
Blankness where shone the star-faces of love.
Oft the dear image arising before us
Deep in our hearts will rekindle the pain;
Oft will his presence in secret be o'er us,
We who his like will not look on again.

World that in blatant success has its pleasure,
Little it knows of the soul that was here ;
Judgment with learning allied in full measure,
Mind of the statesman, and eye of the seer.
On our horizon as danger is growing
‘Were he but here!’ the heart whispers, and sighs :
Now, where earth’s knowledge seems hardly worth
knowing,
He may not teach the new lore of the skies.
Faithful and true !—Affection unsleeping,
Wisdom mature, ere thy summer had flown ;—
Ah, in thy youth thou wast ripe for the reaping ;
He who had lent thee, now calls back his own.

Tender and true !—One look more as we leave thee
Silent and cold in the bloom of thy day ;
One more adieu ere the Master receive thee ;—
Love that has once been, is Love for aye.

MEMORIAL VERSES

ON

CHARLES DICKENS

June 1, 1870

I

They arose and heard he was gone ;
 And a thrill of electric pain
 Smote through each English breast,
 World-wide from East to West,
 That we never should hear him again.

2

And wherever the English speech,
 Binding the nations in one,
 Like a river round earth has roll'd
 Its girdle of stubborn gold,
 A splendour fell from the sun.

3

The spell that on millions at once
Work'd laughter and tears at his will :
The glory of genius that flamed
O'er the landscape his fancy had framed ;
The voice of the charmer is still.

4

The flame of that generous wrath
Which wither'd the oppressor is cold,—
The champion of all who endure,
The voice of the voiceless and poor,
The heart that could never grow old.

5

Yes! From the whole world's sky
We knew 'twas a star that had fled
When the lightnings that circle the earth,
Mute flashes of sadness and mirth,
Told East and West, 'He is dead.'

6

—How should we measure it, Fame?
How balance diffusion and weight?

How discern if the years far away
Will re-echo the shout of to-day,
‘Great in the ranks of the great’?

7

—Twice in our century, twice
Only, that cry has been heard
By a nation’s unison swell’d,
‘All bosoms his magic has held,
And his name is a household word.’

8

Our fathers that unison heard
In youth, as we hear it now,
When, toward his own country-side led
By the spirit within him, the head
Of ‘the whole world’s darling’ lay low.

9

And loud-tongued dispensers of fame,
Judges with envy-dim eye,
Said ‘The tale and the legend were gay
Manufactures well wrought for the day,
And his spell with the day would go by.’

10

Not so ! The wild Past that he loved,
The heroic adventure and strife,
Lake, glen, that we never may see,
In the light of that witchery,
Glow yet with the fulness of life.

11

Lord of Romance and the North !
Whilst Melrose in twilight is gray,
Whilst Eildon the triple pride
Of his crest lifts over Strathclyde,
In the hearts of men is thy sway.

12

There only is durable reign !
—Auroral flashings of wit ;
Touches of tragical might
Fraught with such strange delight
That we cannot fathom it ;

13

Wonders of exquisite art ;
Beauty that earth cannot give ;

The spell that lays bare the dim, gray
Caves of the soul to the day;
—In their magic awhile we may live.

14

But the fame that the whole world's heart
In its golden girdle shall bind,
Must have root in a richer soil,
And its lamp be made bright with the oil
Of love for all humankind.

15

And the work must not only be true,
But intense with the passion of truth,
The hatred of coldness and lie;
To the nobler nature must cry,
That shall merit eternal youth.

16

And the verse that will never grow old
With a life-blood current must roll,
In the music of heaven have part,—
The cry of the heart to the heart
And the song of the soul in the soul.

*ELIZABETH AT TILBURY**Autumn, 1588*

Let them come, come never so proudly,
 O'er the green waves in tall array ;
 Silver clarions menacing loudly,
 ' All the Spains ' on their pennons gay ;
 High on deck of their gilded galleys
 Our light sailers they scorn below :—
 We will scatter them, plague, and shatter them,
 Till their flag hauls down to the foe !
 For our oath we swear
 By the name we bear
 By England's Queen and England free and fair,—
 Her's ever and her's still, come life, come death :
 God save Elizabeth !

Sidonía, Recalde, and Leyva

Watch from their bulwarks in swarthy scorn ;
 Lords and Princes by Philip's favour :
 We by birthright are noble born !

Freemen born of the blood of freemen,
Sons of Cressy and Flodden are we :
We shall sunder them, fire, and plunder them,—
English boats on the English sea !

And our oath we swear

By the name we bear

By England's Queen and England free and fair,—
Her's ever and her's still, come life, come death :

God save Elizabeth !

Drake and Frobisher, Hawkins and Howard,
Raleigh, Cavendish, Cecil and Brooke,
Hang like wasps by the flagships tower'd,
Sting their way through the thrice-piled oak :—
Let them range their seven-mile crescent,
Giant galleons, canvass wide !

Ours will harry them, board, and carry them,
Plucking the plumes of the Spanish pride.

For our oath we swear

By the name we bear,

By England's Queen and England free and fair,—
Her's ever and her's still, come life, come death :

God save Elizabeth !

—Has God risen in wrath and scatter'd,
Have his tempests smote them in scorn?
Past the Orcades, dumb and tatter'd,
'Mong sea-beasts do they drift forlorn?
We were as lions hungry for battle;
God has made our battle his own!
God has scatter'd them, sunk, and shatter'd them:
Give the glory to him alone!
While our oath we swear
By the name we bear,
By England's Queen and England free and fair,—
Her's ever and her's still, come life, come death:
God save Elizabeth!

*MENTANA**Nov., 1867*

Lion-hearts of young Italy!

Field where none died in vain!

Beardless boys and famine-gaunt

Corpses along the plain,—

Did not enough of ye die

On the field where none died in vain,

Lion-hearts of young Italy!

Field where death was victory,

Blood that gush'd not in vain

When the deadly rifle of France

Crash'd with its iron rain;

'Neath the pine-dotted slopes of Tivoli

The triumph is with the slain,

Lion-hearts of young Italy!

Noble error, if error,
To make their fatherland one!—
Through her five-and-twenty centuries
Rome counts no worthier son,
Than he who led them to die
Where death and triumph were one,—
Lion-hearts of young Italy!

For the blood of Mentana
To the blood of Thermopylae calls,
And the blood of Marathon answers,
Not in vain, not in vain he falls
Who stakes his life on the die
When the voice of Freedom calls,
Lion-hearts of young Italy!

Passionate instinct for truth,
Children and heroes in one,
Reason higher than reason,
Light from beyond the sun:—
Did not enough of ye die
To knit your country in one,
Lion-hearts of young Italy?

Pity not them as they lie
Crown'd with the fortunate dead ;
Pity not them, but the foe,—
For the precious drops that they shed
Sow but the seed of victory !
Pity the foe, not the dead,
Lion-hearts of young Italy !

Yours, to be gallant and true,
Yours, for your country to die,
Yours to be *Men of Mentana*,
Highly esteem'd 'mong the high :—
Theirs, to look on at your victory !
For did not enough of ye die,
Lion-hearts of young Italy ?

Brief the day of November,
Long to the remnant that fought ;
Boys too young for the battle,
Naked and hunger-distraught :—
No, not too young to die,
Falling where each one fought,
Lion-hearts of young Italy !

*THE NOBLE REVENGE**ODE TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA*

1869

O bright and single moment, when
 The clouds above us part, and men
 Behold some golden goal on high
 Shine graspable within the farthest sky :—
 Onward and upward ! Then they close
 On the dull laggard's eye, and bar advance,
 And bid him doze :—
 His chance he had, and lost it :
 But others have their chance !

It may be, in some doubtful fight,
 Courage to see and choose the right ;
 Or, leading some assault past hope,

To tread with even step the gun-crown'd slope;
Or 'gainst some giant falsehood's head
Before the whole world to stand forth, alone,
And strike it dead;
Or, for some wrong wrought on us,
By pardon to atone.

And e'en in England's later years
Of unstrung nerves and foolish fears,
While hoarse-lung'd prophets trade in woe,
And grumblers echo with *It must be so*,
And every grinning gossip's glass
Perks up for spots, not light, the sun to view,
—O'er that mean mass
Some few have dared to tower,
And greatly hope and do.

And often so
It is with nations; As when one fair land
Saw, North and South, her bright-arm'd myriads
stand,
Saw herself rent in twain by matricidal hand:

Though both were gallant, though
High deeds on either side were wrought,
Yet one for self, and one for mankind fought :
And when war's lurid cloud
From the clear skies had pass'd,
The golden eye of life
From heaven shone bold and free
On white-robed Victory,
And the Right won at last.

—But she, the mother-land, that erst
Those swarms in her full hive had nursed,
Watch'd, sneering, the enormous fight,
Or wish'd the drones success, with blinded spite,
Or hail'd with jealous pettiness
Each bloody field that drank her rivals' strength
And left them less ;
Till, in the cause that triumph'd,
She acquiesced at length.

So most who wrote, and most who spoke :—
But underneath that servile yoke

The dumb, deep-beating, genuine heart
Of England would not crouch, but smiled apart,
Knowing the Right at last must be :—
Nor waver'd in her faith while the long march
Swept towards the sea ;
Nor when fair Freedom's martyr,
The headstone of your arch

Fell, for his work below was done :
—England has no nobler son !
Now, by his blood, and by his name,
She calls you to be worthy of your fame :
Another trial-hour is now ;
Now o'er the main she looks with eager glance
And bended brow :—
Our chance we had, and lost it !
But you have yet your chance !

O men who won !
O other larger England, saved, and free
Forget the error past, past jealousy !
With your true blood our true blood beats across
the sea.

Let what is done, be done ;
The two great hearts in one unite ;
Revenge our blindness by your clearer sight.
Victors in freedom's fight,
Another conflict see,
An upward-flashing path
To win a new renown,—
Crown'd with the greater crown
Of magnanimity !

*AT LYME REGIS**September, 1870*

Calm, azure, marble sea
As a fair palace pavement largely spread,
Where the gray bastions of the eternal hills
Lean over languidly,
Bosom'd with leafy trees, and garlanded !

Peace is on all I view ;
Sunshine and peace ; earth clear as heaven one hour ;
Save where the sailing cloud its dusky line
Ruffles along the blue,
Brush'd by the soft wing of the silent shower.

In no profounder calm
Did the great Spirit over ocean brood,
Ere the first hill his yet unclouded crest
Rear'd, or the first fair palm
Doubled her maiden beauty in the flood.

Yet if the sapphire veil
That rounds the verge were rent aside, what fast
Flashings of flame blood-red, and blood-red smoke,
What crash of steel-tipp'd hail,
Across this calm what horror would be cast!

Here, in her ancient home,
Peace, sovran set since Commons warr'd with King:—
There, the fair plains where none has lived his life
Unvex'd by din of drum,
Or clash of arms, or panic hurrying.

Here, Nature's gentlest hues:—
There, on the dinted field a crimson stream,
River of death, once life, corrupts the turf;
And the pure natural dews
Breathe rank and lurid 'mid the charnel steam.

Here, in God's acre, death
Smooths a green couch of rest for the white head :—
There, stack'd in piles of tortured flesh, the young,
 Gasping a quick, hot breath,
Envy the gentler portion of the dead.

I see the dark array
As a long snake unroll itself, and thrust
Against a wall of flame ; then decompose,
 Arrested in mid way ;
Writhing at first ; now motionless in dust.

Unswerving files ! ye went
Right on the gaping mouths of hail and fire,
For God and Fatherland,—as they, whose lives,
 Through glorious error spent,
At Balaklava made the world admire !

Or a beleaguer'd town
The floods of war out all around surveys,
And holds on with stout heart, though the dread bomb
 In her mid streets rains down,
And wolf-gaunt famine prowls through all her ways.

Or the red ranks of France,
Wall'd three-fold round by those grim Northern bands,
Holding their blood cheap, and their land, how dear !

Thrice and thrice more advance :—
In vain !—Fate bars them with relentless hands.

——Fair France ! Great Germany !
What less than demon impulse, rage for ill,
Could taint the natural love of man for man
With hellish savagery,
Its selfish aims through ruin to fulfil ?

Was it for this your hands
Master'd each kindly trade, each art of life ?
The mind explored all knowledge, and the wit
Flash'd wisdom through all lands ;
And all to glut the cannon and the knife ?

Not when earth soaks with gore,
And man on man halloos the fiendish chase,
Send forth your red-cross knights to nurse the dead !
But going out before,
Staunch the mad jealousy of race 'gainst race.

The boast of brotherhood,
The pride of science, progress, skill, and wealth,
Shame us :—for each hard-conquer'd gain, the world
Rolls back its weary road,
And the kind makes no step to higher health.

He who against the slope
Heaved the returning rock, and heaved again,
Was man's true ancestor :—Ourselves to know ;—
In hope to work 'gainst hope ;—
This is the sole advance the Fates ordain.

Peace !—in the very word
There seems a blessing :—Peace ! From thoughts too
deep
Turn to fair Nature's teachings, and the calm,
By fretful man unstirr'd,
Her gentle laws in even current keep.

No fruitless strife she holds ;
No jealous war for bare supremacy ;
But Order binds the elements, and Love
By strong attraction folds
All atoms in one golden unity.

Nor fair Utopian plan
Nor false horizons lure her from her road;
Where Fate says 'Yield,' she yields; and what she
would

Changing for what she can,
Transmutes all evil into final good.

God's way he best discerns
Who tracks it, frankly bold, yet calm with awe:
To whom, through strife, and seeming waste, and
death,

The night of Nature, burns
The central star of Reason and of Law.

NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1871

We have look'd for thee long;—and behold thee,
Ice at the heart, tear frozen on tear;
Snowdrifts and sorrow the robes that enfold thee,
O bitter New Year!

Thou art come; and the light of thy morning
Lurid arises and baleful and drear;
Blood-stain'd the world; skies ruthless and scorning,
O bitter New Year!

Oft of science and peace they have told us;
Songs of advance too loud in our ear:
War and red ravin and hatred enfold us
In the bitter New Year!

Thou art come: and the breath of thy coming
Scorches with carnage and freezes with fear;
Flame at thy lips, but flame icy and numbing,
O bitter New Year!

For the mother is cold by the cradle,
Babes in the bosom shrivell'd and sere;
Brides at the bridal for silver have sable
In the bitter New Year.

And the young men of France in the trenches,
Old men and infants are stiff on the bier:—
Yet the brave heart of the land never blanches
In the bitter New Year!

From the fields of defeat and betrayal
Once more, when all appear'd lost, they are here;
Once more enrank'd for thy dreadful assayal,
O bitter New Year!

They may go like the thousands before them,
Dying for France, the down-trodden, the dear:
Yet on their deathbed her glory is o'er them
In the bitter New Year.

Though the furnace be seven-fold heated,
Forth will she leap, resplendent and clear :
Purged of her dross, though forlorn and defeated
In the bitter New Year !

Till renew'd in the strength of her splendour,
Purer and prouder her face she will rear :
And thou for each burden a blessing wilt render,
O bitter New Year !

*THE ESQUILINE FIELD**Rome, B.C. 10*

Beneath the Servian rampart,
Where the air should be pure and sweet,
The dead-man's field of the City
Lies at the Romans' feet.

Afar it gleams like a chalk-pit ;
But, walking above, you may see
Vast acres of bones that whiten
The gloomy Esquiliae.

There, the lash and the workhouse over,
The corpse of the swarthy slave
They toss to corrupt and crumble,
Not worth its faggot and grave.

There, no longer fit to be noticed
In her master's amorous hour,
The limbs of the little handmaiden
Lie stark in frost and shower.

There the sighs of murder'd infants
That hardly look'd on the sun,
With the sighs of the coarse reed grasses
Creep faintly and blend into one.

From Africa, Gaul, and Britain,
From Dacia and Asia they came,
Each a perfect human creature,
To toil and fetters and shame.

Torn from the distant village,
Torn from their natural air,
To know nought of life but the burden,
And die and be cast out there.

And the elegant throng on the rampart
Essence in hand goes by,
When the whiff of the charnel sickens
The nose of Society.

But a social reform is coming,
For Maecaenas will buy the place,
And set it out in fair gardens,
And the dead-man's field efface:—

And fashion will frisk and simper,
And acknowledge the charming spot:
—But the bones and the souls that own'd them,
I say, will they be forgot?

The souls disfeatured and ruin'd,
Bodies ground down to waste,
To form a broad foundation
For comfort and wealth and taste?

And Vienna, London, and Paris,
Have they such a field to show?
—How can you?—Culture and Science
Manage things better, we know.

A MOTHER'S LAMENT

With the cottage girls and the poor
 It often is so, they say :
 Yet 'tis to each mother as much
 As if she were the only such
 Whose daughter has wander'd astray.

She troubled and pain'd me oft ;
 Yet I loved her beyond them all,
 Fanciful ever and wild,
 My dark-eyed gipsy child,
 Dark-hair'd and nut-brown and tall.

They say she loved notice and dress ;
 There was nothing to make me amazed :

Perhaps it was vanity there ;
For her looks an overcare,
 An overcare to be praised.

Yet no such sweet temper as her's,
 No smiles like her's in the place ;
When she garnish'd the cottage out,
Or carried the youngest about,
 And she with her mere child's face !

And I guarded her all I could ;
 But what can be done by the poor ?
She went from her home far away,
Where respite was none, night or day,
 Nor comfort within the door.

Yet if she had had her chance,
 She would have been gentle and good ;
Have kept a pure maiden breast,
By respect for herself repress'd
 The dance of the youthful blood.

But praise, on her simple looks,
And gold, on her wearisome life
Where never a happiness came,
Like sunbeams fell:—and the shame
Was hid in some whisper of ‘wife.’

I know not if she believed,
For she was only a child;
She took his base jewels for true;
She could not keep out of his view,
And turn’d unsettled and wild.

And jest and lust and the pride
Of conquest urged on the suit;
Half force, half folly:—but O
The shame of advantage, so
Won on a child by a brute!

And he had his play and his laugh,
And pass’d on to his pleasures elsewhere:
But she—where she hides her head,

And if with the living or dead,
To think I cannot dare.

She dares not come back, nor knows
For her face how I linger and yearn:—
Whatever there be, I forgive,—
O one hour, to tell if you live,
Only one hour, return!

—If ever the child has her chance
She may yet be honest and good.
God will pity the lost, and exact
From the tempter the price of his act;
For upon his head is her blood.

QUIA DILEXIT MULTUM

Yes! she is outcast from the world;
 The decent crowd of rich and good
 With scorn or silence pass her by,
 Or bid her search the streets for food:—
 Yet, when the jewels are made up,
 She shall be ransom'd, yet;
 For she has loved him more than all,
 And he will not forget.

'Tis not he does not prize the pure,
 Or disesteems the holy heart,
 Or judges each the same as all,
 Or fails to take his liegemen's part:
 But that he sees us as we are
 With calm of perfect eyes;
 Reads sorrow hid in eager mirth,
 And smiles beneath our sighs.

The pitfalls set around the poor,
The impulse of this human blood,
The hunger-hounds that tear the flesh,
Unshared, unfelt, are known of God ;
How very shame disarms the girl,—
Hell hard by heaven in love,—
The weight upon the weaker heap'd,—
Are all confess'd above.

Ah ! strange such things on earth should be !
Ah ! little arc of the great whole
That our dim eyes can measure here,
Harsh judgments of the happy soul !
The woman's heart in her yet lives,
And shall be ransom'd, yet ;
For she has loved him more than all,
And he will not forget.

THE COTTAGE HOME

Clothed in a cloud of green woodbine,
 Its feet with the red rose bound,
 It stands like a fairy creature
 On its own dear fairy ground :
 'Neath eave-brow'd casements the martin
 With a cry dips into his nest :
 The turf breathes white from the gable,
 And all breathes sweetness and rest :—
 But they clear the cottages off on this estate ;
 And for picturesqueness without, within there is
 gloom ;
 For it is not sweet when four boys and three girls
 and the parents
 Must herd in a single room.

Girt with a fringe of fair forest
 As a cup with vine-leaves bound,
 The valley lies like a fragment
 Of Paradise lost and found :—

Safe from the talons of tempest,
From all that can ravage and blot,
It smiles to its smiling heaven
In the peace that the world knows not.
—But they clear the cottages off on this estate;
And from the choke and heat of the fever-smit
room,
Where nine are stabled and one is groaning in shame,
There rises a reek of gloom.

O blot unatoned-for by beauty!
Fair face,—and Death laughing below!
O dumb endurance of lifetimes,
O dim degradation and woe!
In the breast of the rose is a canker,
A tear in the heart of the dew,
Where Nature has all her sweetness,
And man is a blur on the view!
For they clear the cottages off on this estate:
And the ragged peak of the window-dismantled
room,
As an eyeless skull where the vermin burrow and
shriek,
Stares now like a sign of doom.

THE TOWN

‘Smoke, wealth, and noise,’ the Roman’s list,
Exhaust not all the city yields ;
The mid-day glare : the hush of night :
The breath of fields
Blown through dim blue-air’d streets at earliest light.

There the last shout of parting friends
Hoarse from their wine, and hot retreats,
Joins the fresh chorus they troll forth
Who know the streets
But as the place where labour has its worth.

They care not how the glooms of eve
Behind each dawn their ambush make,

Nor for the narrow toilsome round,
Ache upon ache,
Till the bent limbs crawl to the nameless mound.

There some poor wanderer of the ways
Through nursery casement hears the cry
Of restless childhood ; and her heart
Sickens to die
At thought how *Such thou wast ; and this thou art.*

Then the cool bathes her face, and hope
And love of life, their strength regain.
And the tide rises in the ways,
And the full main
Of being swells beneath the climbing rays.

The barefoot children on the roads
Shout in shrill hunger playing ; weeds
Toss'd random on the waste : while wealth
Her darling leads
Through the fenced paths of happiness and health.

And one is on the chase of gold,
And one for bread he cannot find;
For love, for lust, for foe, for friend:
And each is blind,
Save where his impulse leads, and inner end.

So death and life, and wealth and want,
O'er the long pavements of the town
Fling light with darkness: whilst on high
The sun casts down
The calm observance of his golden eye.

TO A SPRING-HEAD IN SOUTH WALES

Child of the rock ! not chill as those
 That from the sapphire glacier go,
 Yet marble-fresh to lips and brows
 That dip within thy lucid flow,
 And rise with quicken'd strength, and inward glow :

—Like thee the wise,—with equal glance
 Watching the fever of the day,
 The boasts of premature advance,
 The groans of querulous dismay,—
 Hot hopes, weak fears, with temperate draughts
 allay.

—E'en thus with pure unswerving force
Thine unremittent waters go ;
And all around thy cradle-source
The ferns their green embroidery throw,
And the lush grasses net themselves below :—

And from the homestead in the glen
A girl her hollow pitcher brings,
And loads with liquid crystal :—then
Above her head the weight she swings,
And down the vale her even carol rings.

IN HIGH SAVOY

Nature's fair, fruitless, aimless world

Men take and mould at will :

Scoop havens from the wasteful sea ;

Tame heaths to green fertility,

And grind their roadway through the hill.

Another aspect now she dons,

Changed by the hands of men :—

What harvest plains of golden hope !

What vineyards on the amber slope !

What lurid forge-lights in the glen !

Yet still some relics she reserves

Of what was all her own :—

Keeps the wild surface of the moor,

Or, where the glacier-torrents roar,

Reigns o'er gray piles of wrinkled stone.

And though man's daily strengthening sway
Contracts her precinct fair,
Yet round smooth sweeps of vine-set land
Her vaporous ranks of summit stand
As ghosts in morning's silent air:—

Or on vast slopes, unplough'd, untrod,
She vindicates her right;
Green billows of primaeval copse,
Tossing a myriad spiry tops
'Neath the full zenith-flood of light:—

Or where,—whilst o'er Rhone's azure lake
Heaven's azure stainless lies,—
From the White Mount the white clouds strike
As if volcano-born, or like
The smoke of some great sacrifice.

TO FIDELE

Care not, if in her lucid course
Unveiling intermediate laws,
And ever-flowing streams of force,
And analysing all to one,
Science or seeks or shuns the Cause.

Care not, if searching History pour
Her blaze on what of old was writ,
Or if the text revered of yore
Resign the sole and special place
Blind human love imposed on it.

On all we know with gracious smiles
The great Omniscience looks : nor cares
If ill or well we sum the miles
'Twixt earth and sun ; nor how the strife
Of real and ideal fares.

But the high heart, the noble aim,
The fair soul speaking in the face,
In the divine true portion claim:—
And oft to those who own him least
The Master comes with special grace.

Then fear not, if the jangling sects
Announce each other fool or knave:
Nor let thy central peace be vexed
When pulpit-fulminations blaze,
Or fervid Nature-prophets rave.

But pray thy prayer and keep thy creed
In modest majesty of soul:—
'Tis the pure hand and heart They heed
Who mark the fallen sparrow's cry,
And are the Infinite they control.

THE REIGN OF LAW

I

The dawn goes up the sky
 Like any other day;
 And these have only come
 To mourn Him where he lay.
'We ne'er have seen the law
Reversed, 'neath which we lie;
Exceptions none are found,
And when we die, we die.
Resign'd to fact we wander hither;
We ask no more the whence and whither.

2

'Vain questions! from the first
Put, and no answer found.
He binds us with the chain
Wherewith himself is bound.

*From west to east the earth
Unrolls her primal curve;
The sun himself were vex'd
Did she one furlong swerve:
The myriad years have whirl'd her hither,
But tell not of the whence and whither.*

3

*'We know but what we see—
Like cause, and like event;
One constant force runs on
Transmuted, but unspent:
From her own laws the mind
Infers a conscious plan;
Deducing from within
God's special thought for man:
The natural choice that brought us hither
Is silent on the whence and whither.*

4

*'If God there be, or Gods,
Without our science lies;
We cannot see or touch,
Measure, nor analyse.*

*Life is but what we live,
 We know but what we know,
 Closed in these bounds alone
 Whether God be, or no:
 The self-moved force that bore us hither
 Reveals no whence, and hints no whither.*

5

*'Ah, which is likelier truth,
 That law should hold its way,
 Or, for this one of all,
 Life reassert her sway?
 Like any other morn
 The sun goes up the sky;
 No crisis marks the day;
 For when we die, we die.
 No fair fond hope allures us hither;
 The law is dumb on whence and whither.'*

6

—Then, wherefore are ye come?
 Why watch a worn-out corse?
 Why weep a ripple past
 Down the long stream of force?

If life is that which keeps
Each organism whole,
No atom may be traced
Of what he thought the soul :
It had its term of passage hither,
But knew no whence, and knows not whither.

7

The forces that were Christ
Have ta'en new forms and fled ;
The common sun goes up ;
The dead are with the dead.
'Twas but a phantom life
That seem'd to think and will,
Evolving self and God
By some subjective skill ;
That had its day of passage hither,
But knew no whence, and knows no whither.

8

If this be all in all ;
Life, but one mode of force ;
Law, but the plan which binds
The sequences in course ;

All essence, all design
Shut out from mortal ken :
—We bow to Nature's fate,
And drop the style of men !
The summer dust the wind wafts hither
Is not more dead to whence and whither.

9

—But if our life be life,
And thought, and will, and love
Not vague unrhythmic airs
That o'er wild harp-strings move ;
If consciousness be aught
Of all it seems to be,
And souls are something more
Than lights that gleam and flee ;
Though dark the road that leads us thither,
The heart must ask its whence and whither.

10

To matter or to force
The All is not confined ;
Beside the law of things
Is set the law of mind ;

One speaks in rock and star,
And one within the brain,
In unison at times,
And then apart again;
And both in one have brought us hither
That we may know our whence and whither.

II

The sequences of law
We learn through mind alone;
'Tis only through the soul
That aught we know is known:—
With equal voice she tells
Of what we touch and see
Within these bounds of life,
And of a life to be;
Proclaiming One who brought us hither,
And holds the keys of whence and whither.

12

O shrine of God that now
Must learn itself with awe!
O heart and soul that move
Beneath a living law!

That which seem'd all the rule
Of Nature, is but part ;
A larger, deeper law
Claims also soul and heart.
The force that framed and bore us hither
Itself at once is whence and whither.

13

We may not hope to read
Nor comprehend the whole
Or of the law of things
Or of the law of soul :
Among the eternal stars
Dim perturbations rise ;
And all the searchers' search
Does not exhaust the skies ;
He who has framed and brought us hither
Holds in his hands the whence and whither.

14

He in his science plans
What no known laws foretell ;
The wandering fires and fix'd
Alike are miracle :

The common death of all,
The life renew'd above,
Are both within the scheme
Of that all-circling love ;
The seeming chance that cast us hither
Accomplishes his whence and whither.

15

Then, though the sun go up
His beaten azure way,
God may fulfil his thought
And bless his world to-day ;
Beside the law of things
The law of mind enthrone,
And, for the hope of all,
Reveal Himself in One ;
Himself the way that leads us thither,
The All-in-all, the Whence and Whither.

NATURE AND MAN

The trees in their greenest ;
 The summer-still'd voice of the stream,
 In the pause of the nightingale
 Heard as far off in a dream ;
 Deep meadows, where Iris
 Her scarf has flung down in her mirth,
 While Heaven, one sapphire,
 With a blue smile closes on earth :—

Here in Nature's aloneness,
 What need, Shepherd, of thee ?
 Why this blot, this intrusion
 Of poor humanity ?
 With the forces around thee
 Thou would'st hold contention in vain ;
 With the music of Nature
 Idly thou matchest thy strain.

—Ah no, 'tis another
Lesson the landscape must give :
'Tis but in the mirror
Of mind these pageantries live :
When the eye that beholds them
Is closed, the radiance dies ;
From the trees the greenery,
The sapphire goes from the skies :—

To his ear the streamlet
To his ear only may sing ;
O'er his hand the crystal
Run cool, as he dips it therein :—
O Nature, we know thee
Alone as thou art to the soul :
While we know that we only
Are as atoms that float in the Whole.

THE VOICES OF NATURE

I

Wearied with the golden glare,
With the noise of worldly things,
Take us to thy larger air,
To the shadow of thy wings !
In the wild with Nature lonely
Listening for thy message only.

2

—In the meadows, in the vales,
In the greenness of the grove ;
Where the snowy sea-bird sails,
Blue below and blue above ;
Where the echoes pause to hear us,
More than what we know is near us.

3

Living light along the dim

Verge, where summer dawning breaks ;
Slopes of rock on hill-sides grim ;

Mid-day sun on silent lakes ;
Homeless cry of breezes roaming ;
Movements in the hazy gloaming ;

4

Emerald rents in icy streams ;

Walls of sea, from mountain tops
Caught afar in violet gleams ;

Sighings of the midnight copse ;
Peaks in fierce contortions riven,
Menacing the quiet heaven ;—

5

O, a hidden life, we cry,

Lurks beneath this eyeless mask !
Soul of Nature, thou art nigh ;

Speak !—we hear !—In vain we ask :
She is mute to man's appealing,
Heartless 'neath the show of feeling.

6

What in Nature is our share,
Blind 'mid all her loveliness,—
This inexorable fair,—
This unconscious awfulness?
What lies hid behind her seeming,
Felt, not seen, in fitful gleaming?

7

When the glare of day is past,
And the thousand ancient eyes
Open on us in the vast,
To the heart their influence flies ;
And the sea of worlds around us
To a nothing seems to bound us.

8

Far beyond Orion bright
Cloud on cloud the star-haze lies ;
Million years bear down the light
Earthward from those ghost-like eyes.
As a little thing beholding
Man his long career unfolding.

9

And the silver ways of heaven
Wind like rivers o'er the sky,
Till the regent moon, with even
Pace, unveils her majesty;
O'er some dusky ridge appearing,
Boat of heaven through heaven steering.

10

—Who is man, and what his place,
Anxious asks the heart, perplex'd
In this recklessness of space,
Worlds with worlds thus intermix'd:
What has he, this atom creature,
In the infinitude of Nature?

11

—Morning comes, where, eastward spread,
Cloudy curtains fold the day,
Till the Dawn quits Tithon's bed,
Till the bold sun rends his way:
Then to climb the zenith golden,
All that lives, as his, beholding.

12

In thyself well might'st thou trust,
God of ancient days, O Sun !
All thy sequent stars the dust
From thy whirling car-wheels spun :
All that lies within thy seeing
From thy golden smile has being.

13

Who the ages can recount
Since the vaporous ring of earth,
Floating from the central fount,
Orb'd together at the birth,
Or since, in the warmer ocean,
Life in her first cell had motion ?

14

As beyond the furthest star
Star-clouds swim in golden haze,
So, in long procession, far
Passes life beyond our gaze :
Myriad stars and systems o'er us ;
Myriad layers of life before us.

15

Through the mollusc, through the worm,
Life reveals her gradual plan ;
Form developing to form,
Till the cycle stays with man,—
Feeblest born and last in season,
Yet sole child and heir of reason.

16

Is this all, the heart once more
Asks, if,—after ages gone,
Slow upheavals, shore on shore,
Years on years condensed in stone,
Weary steps of voiceless story,
Life in us attain'd her glory.

17

If, through long-evolving choice,
Man attain'd his dizzy place,
Poised 'twixt two infinities,
Endless time, and boundless space,
What is he, this atom creature,
Wavering in the abyss of Nature?

18

—In the early days of life
Nature's law seem'd chaos wild ;
Earth with Deity was rife ;
Man, the Gods' own care and child,
His own soul in all things seeing,
Deem'd himself the crown of being.

19

Wider his horizons grown,
Man acknowledges his place ;
Sees his dot of life alone
In the vast of time and space :
Blind mechanic forces round him
On all sides conspire to bound him :—

20

All creation save himself
Seems by changeless law to flow :
He, like some poor childish elf
Where huge engines groan and go ;
'Mid the ponderous systems turning
No place left for him discerning :

21

Then, in wonderment and fear
At the Whole he dimly grasps,
To the senses bounds his sphere,
Life as his sole portion clasps;
All that passes man's exploring
As of no avail ignoring :—

22

Sweeps aside, as vague or vain,
All of spiritual source;
Soul, a function of the brain;
God, a metaphor for Force :
So, half pride of heart, half humbly,
Sits and waits his future dumbly.

23

—Voice of Nature in the heart.
Waken us to braver things!
Teach how all at which we start
From the mind's own magic springs :
Born within that inward mirror,
Ghosts we raise we flee in terror.

24

Thy whole universe is less
Than one atom-grain of thought ;
Forms of man's own consciousness,
Space and Time o'erwhelm him not :
Feeblest born and last in season,
Yet sole child and heir of reason.

25

Conscious in his heart alone,
Nature reads herself in Man :
Only here has freedom known,
Bound elsewhere by changeless plan :
Elsewhere, blind instinctive being ;
Here alone is seen and seeing.

26

Now, on all we touch and see,
As progressive truth evolves,
Science lays her high decree,
Matter into Force resolves ;
Force by other force replaces ;
Points to one that all embraces :

27

As though every star that shines,
All this universe we see,
Space through all her wide confines,
Modes of one vast force might be ;
Sole, within itself abiding,
Though 'neath myriad faces hiding.

28

Call her law, this wondrous whole,
Call her force,—the heart of man
Hears the voice within the soul
Dominant o'er Nature's plan ;
Laws of mind their echo finding
In the laws on atoms binding.

29

—Voice of Nature in the heart,
Narrow though our science, though
Here we only know in part,
Give us faith in what we know !
To a fuller life aspiring,
Satisfy the heart's desiring :—

30

Tell us of a force, behind
Nature's force, supreme, alone :
Tell us of a larger mind
Than the partial power we own :
Tell us of a Being wholly
Wise and great and just and holy :—

31

Toning down the pride of mind
To a wiser humbleness,
Teach the limits of mankind,
Weak to know, and prompt to guess,
On the mighty shores that bound us
Childlike gathering trifles round us :—

•

32

Teach how, yet, what here we know
To the unknown leads the way,
As the light that, faint and low,
Prophesies consummate day ;
How the little arc before us
Proves the perfect circle o'er us :—

33

How the marr'd unequal scheme
That on all sides here we meet,
Either is a lawless dream,
Or must somewhere be complete ;—
Where or when, if near, or distant,
Known but to the One Existent.

34

—He is. We meanwhile repair
From the noise of human things
To the fields of larger air,
To the shadow of his wings :
Listening for his message only
In the wild with Nature lonely.

ΑΓΝΩΤΩ ΟΕΩ

Ask not what next shall be
 When we have shuffled off
 This so familiar flesh,
 This mortal coil and slough.

The snake renews his youth,
 And flames again in spring ;
 The swallow from the sea
 Floats back on annual wing.

The year-long day of Earth
 Sets in her snowy tomb ;
 But spring by spring comes back
 Resurgent in her bloom.

Yet ask not what shall be
 When once our course is run !
 No lesson lies for us
 In bird, or snake, or sun.

HE, if his being be
Such as our sense can own,
He, whatsoe'er he is,
Unseen, unreach'd, unknown :

In space and air and sun,
Sky, and the stars of it,
Aether and nebula,
He hath no message writ :

Not where beyond Orion
Heave seas of stellar spray ;
Not in the chasms of night
That rend the Milky Way :

Not in the realms of life,
In beast, or bird, or tree ;
Graved on no mountain top,
Dredged from no depths of sea.

With glass and steel we search
The secret human form ;
We find no presage there,
No future but the worm :

From Nature's inmost heart
The final film withdraw ;
Eternal silence reigns,
Bound in eternal law.

Force merges into Force ;
The atom seeks its kind ;
The elements are one,
And each with all combined.

Ah ! man has vainly sought him
In outward things and dead ;
He was not in the woods,
Nor on the mountain-head :

In tempest or in calm,
In forces or in laws,
In proofs of wise design,
In first or final cause.

In thine own being, thine,
Nor elsewhere, search for his ;
Not outer heaven or earth :
Within he speaks and is.

No voice can speak his voice ;
No words his essence tell :
Felt beyond feeling's verge,
Inner, ineffable.

Enough, to know him here,
Far, near, within, around :—
The heavenly treasure flies
Before the touch of sound.

In silence hold thy faith,
Unspeakable, alone :
The unknown future lies
Hid in the God Unknown.

VOX DEI

I trod the bitter streets, that bear alike
 The steps of want and wealth, success and woe :
 Man's work, yet stern to man, as some froze peak
 Of granite-cloaking snow ;
 Refugeless though secure ; enduring ; bleak.

They pass, these souls beneath the mask of man,
 Veil'd each from each, in moving prisons pent :—
 Whence come and whither going, who should say ?
 But each pursues intent
 A common impulse, and a various way.

Ah not alone along the streets, O men,
Whence come, and whither going !—Is this all,
 The things we feel and see ; the petty past
 That each one can recall,
 'The petty future that our eyes forecast ?

—Within the holy haunts of ancient hills,
Or some cool meadow by Kephísus stream,
The fair philosophies of old were born ;
 And, blending truth with dream,
Breathed the soul's freshness and the light of morn.

Well suits the tenour of the stony streets
The townbred science of our senile day,
To cell and current chasing down the soul,—
 Far as she dares, the sway
Of fate and matter broadening o'er the whole.

Is this enough, to sink into the sum
Of the vague being of 'collective Man ?'
Enough, to toil and learn and wed and rear,
 And make life all we can,
A first-class animal our highest sphere ?

Is it true science by 'stern fact' to bound
The knowable ? From the heart the heart to screen ?
In 'certainties of sense' to dwell alone,
 Scorning all things unseen,
Ignoring all experience save our own ?

Pride's limitations mask'd in modesty !
Better the scream of atheist despair,
The servile ritual of the fetish shrine,
 Than that complacent air,
That ceremonial bow to the Divine !

Ah ! something more the suffering multitude
Than Fate's 'inexorable logic' need !
'Than acquiescence in the 'sum of things' !
 Nor does their deathbed heed
The doubtful aid the nature-prophet brings.

To see right done at last ; Good all in all ;
To love and to be loved unendingly ;
Once more the long-lost faces recognize ;—
 The heart's instinctive cry
Such *nunc dimittis* only satisfies.

O mockery, o'er the beasts by Faith, by Love,
By Hope, to rise, and Knowledge,—and be trod
All into clay at last, beneath the frown
 Of an ironic God
Lifting man high, more deeply to cast down !

Yet has he not, God living in the heart,
(Though by man's partial science veil'd from man,
Or by dark clouds of passionate despair,)

Hid all his mystic plan,
Or left us of his being unaware.

O deep assurance that the wrongs of life
Will find their perfect guerdon ! That the scheme
So broken here, will elsewhere be fulfill'd !

Hope not a dreamer's dream !
Love's long last yearnings satisfied, not still'd !

O message of the mind not less assured
Than that which at her gate the senses lay
And she interprets : Oracles of the soul
Of more imperial sway
Than aught that Nature brings us from the Whole,

And higher essence : From the mind herself
Inly developed : Born again as fair
In every child on life's stern struggle thrown,
As when Man's godlike air
First startled Earth her new-found king to own !

—I trod of late the bitter streets, that bear
The steps of want and wealth impassively;
Where men like heartless puppets come and go;
 Business and Vanity,
And selfish scheming, and well-acted woe.

What heaven-sent impulse of humanity,
On these chill ruthless pavements can be bred?
What plant of grace, methought, could here have root?
 Shroud-like the skies and dead;
And God and holy Nature quite shut out.

—It was a child of eight who swept the way
Where mine cross'd her's that morning; hunger-white;
Clad in rags not her own: yet keeping still
 Something of childhood's light;
Blithe at her task, not wholly tamed to ill.

Hardly she dared to ask the bread I gave,
And took as one misdoubting her delight:—
Then eyed the store a moment, and in haste
 Folding her treasure tight,
With little fingers bound it at her waist.

'Twas brought from home,' I said, 'she need not
fear':

And bade her eat, and as she turn'd to flee
Held her; 'she must be hungry'; but 'twas vain:

She heard a stronger plea,
The baby voices crying in their pain

By the black fire-less hearth, unsatisfied.

'They must have some! the children want it so'!

--Her tears were nigh; her whole heart homeward
bent--

'Now would you let me go'?--

And God was with the little feet that went.

VENI CREATOR

O Thou who, as our knowledge grows
 In the world's latter days,
 The more thou seem'st to clear the sky,
 The more dost hide thy face :

—As ever-widening search reveals
 The depth and breadth of ill
 Scourging mankind through all the past,
 And sweeping o'er us still :

As Science, forging day by day
 Her close-link'd chain, withdraws
 The once-felt touches of thy hand
 For dumb organic laws :

As fears of change, and fears of doubt,
 Unnerve the o'er-wrought mind,
 Enfeebled 'mid its added strength,
 'Mid all its seeing, blind :—

The wider wisdom thou hast giv'n
Yet is not wholly gain;
The truer vision scathes our sight;
We cannot see thee plain.

Enlarge our hearts and purge our eyes
To bear thy nearer light!
The world's young ignorance is o'er:
Make us to know thee right.

Book Fourth

HIC JACET

1852

Where she lies low—where she lies low
The great world and its clamours sleep :
The low soft winds above her creep,
With sighing whispers through the grass,
And shake the tearful flowers that blow
Where she lies low.

The ghostly height of ancient walls,
Gray watchmen o'er the couch of death,
Stand shrouded in the marish breath,
Till first the stealthy dawn strikes through,
And smites them with a silvery glow
Where she lies low.

But ever, ever higher yet,
Blithe reveller on pinion strong,
The lark pours out himself in song ;

Then wearied on her turf he drops,
And folds his speckled wings in woe
Where she lies low.

—The earth transfigures her in light :
The living sun is whirl'd on high :—
O golden day ! O happy sky !
O bright satiety of bliss !
Ye mock the settled shades of woe
Where she lies low.

And childhood seats her on the turf,
And shares the noontide meal with joy :
Girl smiles to girl : boy laughs to boy :
—They go :—the robin quits the bush,
And treads the careless flowers that grow
Where she lies low.

And Evening crimsons through the blue ;
And as a bride with cheeks aflame,
Day dyes her face in happy shame,
And blushes at her own delight :
—But lengthening shades of twilight flow
Where she lies low.

O irony of joyless joy !

Pale azure of the heartless sky !

O cold keen stars, unmoved on high !

O all bright things, your glory veil !

There is but one deep night of woe

Where she lies low.

Is there no pity in the sun,

No note of grief in childly mirth ?

Is there no echo from the earth ?

Is there no answer in the sky ?

No hint from Heaven that will'd it so,

Where she lies low ?

—Where she lies low—where she lies low,

There is the hush of holy sleep :

The dewy flowers in silence weep :

There is no place for voice or cry :

It is the utter heart of woe

Where she lies low.

THE DESIRE

At dawn from flower to flower
 The footless soul on fairy pinions went :
 Eternity seem'd in each several hour,
 And joys came quicker than an infant's breath;
 The wish scarce framed, the cry scarce upward sent.
 Ere the Desire cometh.

Heaven's gate to youth is wide ;
 No vain prayer empty-hand with shame returns ;
 God suffers not his children be denied ;
 Youth's highest lavish visions far beneath
 Their sweet fulfilment, when the bosom burns
 And the Desire cometh !

Why then, my God, when less
 Advancing years implore, and deeper cries,
 Should'st thou give least? Why this scant haste
 to bless

When blessings are thrice blest? Why license Death
Love's hand to wither, as we touch the prize

And the Desire cometh?

He, the Compassionate,
Past hope, when all seem'd taken, grants us more,
And on drear earth flings open Heaven's own gate.
Immortal love dawns o'er horizon Death:

A glory of lost faces fills the door,

And the Desire cometh.

CASTELROVINATO

The death-flag darkens on the tower.

The shadow blots the wall :

They wail within my lady's bower,

They groan along the hall :—

The hope of all that knightly house

In hottest strait of battle slain,—

His true-love flung upon the corse,

And kissing his gray lips in vain,—

The young hope of that castle tower

Lies low beneath the wall ;

So well to wail within the bower.

And groan along the hall.

The festal flag is on the tower,

The sunbeam gilds the wall ;

Why should they wail within the bower.

Why groan within the hall ?

The daughter of the house to-day

Her beauty veils in bridal dress :

To others yields her lands and name.

To others yields her loveliness—
For Love is lord of keep and tower.

And climbs the castle wall :—
At eve they sing within the bower,
And dance athwart the hall.

There is no flag upon the tower,
No shadow on the wall :
The chestnut vaults my lady's bower,
The green snake haunts the hall.
A thousand years—a thousand years—
The hearth is cold ; the race has fled :
And rather will the years return
Than any spell restore the dead.—
So well the wind should waste the tower,
The lichen fret the wall ;
The chestnut burgeon in the bower.
The green snake in the hall.

RECOLLECTIONS OF CHILDHOOD

I love the gracious littleness
Of Childhood's fancied reign :
The narrow chambers and the nooks
That all its world contain :
The fairy landscapes on the walls
And half-imagined faces :
The stairs from thoughtless steps fenced off,
The landing loved for races :
—By stranger feet the floors are trod
That still in thought I see :
But the golden days of Childhood
May not return to me.

I love the little room where first
On infant reason broke
The knowledge we had seen before
The place in which we woke :

Where first we link'd a happy eve
 To an all-sunny morning,
 Nor in that rigid chain of time
 Read any note of warning.
 Why are the years together forged
 And bound by Fate's decree,
 If the golden days of Childhood
 May not return to me?

I love the broken plaything ghosts
 That once were living joys:
 Th' extemporized delight we snatch'd
 From toys that were not toys:
 The hands that nursed our infant limbs,
 And bade us 'sleep in clover';
 The lips we shall not kiss again
 That kiss'd us oft and over:—
 These relics of the past I prize,
 Though faint and rare they be:
 For the vanish'd days of Childhood
 May not return to me.

I love the swing that shook between
 The jaw-bones of the whale:

The hollow rocking garden-boat
Fit haunt for feast and tale :
The mat-roof'd cabin where we crouch'd
And scorn'd the storm together :
'Th' initials flourish'd on the beech
To tell our loves for ever :
That half we wish'd and half we fear'd
Another's eyes might see :—
—Ah, that the days of Childhood
May ne'er return to me !

I love the lawn—the scene of high
Hellenic bulrush fights :
Where Homer's heroes, known through Pope,
Gave names to childly knights :
Where after-life was shadow'd out
In feats of happy daring,
'Till each went off the field with joy
The victor-trophies sharing :
'To count the shatter'd darts that lay,
The dints that scarr'd the tree—
—Ah, that the days of Childhood
May ne'er return to me !

I love the palaces we built,
 The fancied brick or stone :
 The forts for happy snowball siege,
 And conquest lightly won :—
 The mimic puppet shows we framed
 To act some Shakespeare story,
 Where Rome and Forres were set forth,
 And Caesar fell in glory :
 Where all was false and all was true
 The moment might decree.—
 —Ah, that the days of Childhood
 May ne'er return to me !

I love the foolish words—that love
 Recorded as they fell :
 The very faults that then we wept,
 The follies prized too well :—
 Alas for loss that Time has wrought :
 For joys, from grief that borrow ;
 For sorrows that we cannot weep,
 And sins that bring no sorrow !
 Where is that unremorseful woe,
 That unreflecting glee?—

Alas! the days of Childhood
May ne'er return to me.

I love the timid soul that blush'd
Before an elder's look :
Yet from its equals in the game
No tyranny could brook :—
That spoke undaunted truth, no veils
Of Custom interposing :
Nor fear'd its weakness and its strength
To open hearts disclosing.
I love the very strife that left
Our souls for love more free :
For the truthful days of Childhood
May ne'er return to me.

--Alas for hands that then we clasp'd ;
For merry tripping feet ;
For daily thoughtless welcomings,
And partings but to meet !
The shout, the song, the leap, the race :
The light of happy faces :
The voice, the eyes of vanish'd love ;
The youthful fond embraces.

—I hoard the thought of things that were,
 And ne'er again shall be :
 For the loving days of Childhood
 May not return to me.

—But O blithe little ones—that dance,
 And bid me join your play :
 How can I share your blessedness ?
 How can I turn away ?—
 Your's are the gleam of azure eyes,
 The light of happy faces :—
 The hurried breath of eager joy,
 The proffer'd pure embraces :—
 What can I then but take the gift,
 The love you lavish free ?—
 —In you the days of Childhood
 May yet return to me.

IBYCUS AND CLEORA

Ἦρι μὲν αἶ τε Κυδώνιαι μαλίδες ἀρδόμεναι ῥοᾶν
 ἐκ ποταμῶν, ἵνα παρΨένων κῆπος ἀκήρατος,
 αἶ τ' οἶνανΨίδες ἀυξόμεναι σκιεροῖσιν ὑφ' ἔρνεσιν
 οἶναρ' οἶς ΨαλέΨοισιν, ἐμοί δ' Ἔρος
 οὐδεμίαν κατάκοιτος ὥραν—

I

THE VOYAGE

White star of the green and distance-hazy coast,
 And is it Linnocréné that I view?
 Before this rediscovery of the lost
 Scarce can I tell if truth herself be true:—
 O glad prophetic warmth that cheers the brain,
 Deceive me not again;
 But let this oracle be without alloy,

Void of some second sense, some heart of pain ;
In boyhood's land to be once more a boy,
Nor joy by her retreating footsteps own,

 This, Hope, I ask alone !

O wild west wind that sigh'st to touch the bay,
O cloven furrow of the volant bark,
O faithful rudder love-straight to the mark,
Stretch all your speed and close this long delay :—

 —For all ye can and more

My spirit leaps on Leuconnese before—
The land I seem'd to quit, yet there alway :

 From Cleora to Cleora

 Is the limit of my way.

I dwelt in exile long and far from Thee :

I sought a solace fitted for my need :

‘ ’Twas no peculiar curse was laid on me ;

‘ Some Providence that wills the heart should bleed.

‘ Patient submissiveness meet ransom bears,

 ‘ Pure wisdom comes thro’ tears.

‘ The close makes all things clear to waiting eyes,

‘ Fix’d on that crown beyond the mist of years :

‘ Enough ! Man may not read the mysteries :

‘Submit ; nor waste thyself on idle grief,
‘For Action is relief.’

—O wild west wind, O truer-hearted breeze,
Is there no yearning in thy length of sighs ?
Can holy Nature her own lore despise,
Yielding her aims before such sophistries ?

Teach me to prize one so ;
Then bid me turn aside the nearing prow
From what I seem’d to quit, yet there alway :—
From Cleora to Cleora
Is the limit of my way.

And I have drunk experience to the lees,
Have waked vain nights with mindful solitude,
Fretting the days on action’s vanities,
And call’d Forgetfulness my final good :
From Friendship’s hand Lethæan goblets quaff’d,
And laugh’d with those that laugh’d.
I ask’d the heart resign’d and full submission,
The flower of Patience on Love’s tomb engraft’d ;
But sorrow from despair takes no remission :
Patience, where Love in trance unconscious breathes,
Amaranthine garlands wreathes.

And as when summer's hour and Enna bloom
Enfranchised from dim Hell Proserpine springs,
So love shakes free the cerement-crumpled wings,
Knowing afar Cleora's voice:—I come—

I come to claim thee now,
Striking the conscious shore with trembling prow—
The shore I seem'd to quit, yet there alway:—

From Cleora to Cleora
Is the limit of my way.

II

A MEETING

What is this silence when I meet thee, Dear,
And after such delay?
Is soul to soul for words too nearly near;
Or are we still apart;
Cleora, say?

The tender hand my boyhood press'd I take,
That thro' some fifteen years
Its young proportion keeps: I cannot speak:
But gaze on that dear pledge
Time more endears.

Ah Love—And has love grown with growing years?
In that dumb moment's show
The question of a life with many fears
Perusing glances ask:
And better so.

There are no mortal words for such request :
Nor could I, Darling, more
Than by the voiceless pleading of the breast,
By the heart's crimson tears,
Thy pity implore :

By all that changeless love to promise thee
For more than life may dare :
By all the burden thou hast laid on me,
Having no other hope
But this despair :—

Not so, the scornful world and custom say :
Submit : be blithe as we.

I take the tenour of the common day :
To common themes the tongue
Again is free.

But ever and anon some transient tone,
Some glance at where thou art—
And mid the jocund throng I stand alone,
And in my all the world
May claim no part.

How will it be, I ask'd me as I came,
With her I left so fair?
—The music of thy beauty is the same;
'Tis the bright voice of yore
Heard on the stair.

Dearest: And hast no little word for ease:
No hint of kindlier strain?
And owns the tender heart no tenderness:
Canst thus endure to give
Painless, such pain?

Ah Child—, ah dearer than aught else on earth,
So far off and so near:—
Spare him a little who so knows thy worth,
But finds no words to say
How thou art dear.

III

ANTICIPATIONS

Sweet Spring, blind quiverings in the breast,
And vague emotions fired along the blood ;—
I know the secret fount of this unrest,
 This vital vernal flood.

Deep in her Demiurgic gloom
Nature, that heeds not oft her children's moan,
From th' alchemic and life-encradling tomb
 Feels sometimes for her own.

She bids the balmier hours return,
And the glad Zephyr imp his crumpled wing ;
The rubies of her crown dilating burn
 When she proclaims it Spring.

She in Cleora's breast, her child,
The living ruby swells with vital fire ;
Fluttering the gentle heart with visions wild
And unexplain'd desire.

Me also, Mother, yet again
By thine inspiring to new hope beguiled,—
By this rewaking of the sleepless pain,
Compassionate thy child !

Sweet Spring, responsive to my breast,
Hope's quicken'd tide that fires along the blood,
Bring the dear kiss of peace for this unrest
And sympathetic flood.

IV

INVOCATION

Low on thy suppliants,
 Us, even us,
Bend thy pure eyelids,
 Lady of Amathus.

Zeus in white majesty
 Lords it on high ;
Pallas with wisdom
 Arches the sky.

Phoebus each morning
 Climbs to his throne ;
Nightly fair Artemis
 Walketh alone.

Yet to thy suppliants,
Us, even us,
Turn thee and smile,
Lady of Amathus !

On the great Presences
Idly we call :
Thou, Aphrodité,
Greater than all.

Come with the sweetness
Love knoweth well,
All thine, only thine,
Utter, ineffable.

Smile on thy suppliants,
Us, even us ;
Smile as of yore,
Lady of Amathus !

V

A SUPPLICATION

As a child on mother's face
Looks a longing lingering gaze ;
He has ask'd a boon and knows not
If she gives or if bestows not :
So I to Thee : so my soul hangs on thine,
Waiting thy whisper and the doom of life :
Life in one word,
Cleora mine.

As sweet lilies to the blue,
Downcast 'neath Aurora's dew,
When Apollo bids, lift up
Tears within each timid cup :
So I to thee when doubt one moment flies,
Uplift the glance that trembles as it dwells ;
Thy face my Heaven ;
God in thine eyes.

And as mariners that view
Typho's dark wing shroud the blue,
Silent thro' the rifted veil
Bid the gracious azure hail;
So where thy crystal casement-quarrels gleam
The voiceless lips a prayerful suppli-ance send;
 Bidding my love
 Wake in thy dream.

In his day of sore distress,
Child, thy child, Cleora, bless :
Heaven mine, thro' clouded skies
Rain the grace of starry eyes.
Life's first last hope to thee I thus consign,
Summ'd in one venture, bosom'd in one word;
 One word sigh-short,—
 Cleora mine.

VI

UNREST

In strange unrest from room to room I glide :

A spell is on me : I must find her now :

I have a word to speak, that on my brow

Is writ in lines of flame,

And to all else what I for her would hide

Betrays my shame.

My moody silence wrong'd her yester-eve :

Methought for pride the gift she so refused

Her young confused blush I more confused

With words of foolish haste

My penitence my heart's-ease should receive

Ere day be past.

In Love's own inmost bower does she dream?
Or is her footstep on the walnut stair?
I track the sounds: I know the passionate air,
The song of yesternight,
'Bells in the valley, flowers by the stream':
They guide me right:—

Through rushen-rustling hall I follow, follow,
Through lucent-paved and pillar'd corridor,
By grape-heap'd altar-niche and vine-hung door,
And lawnward 'neath the glade:
Where with one high lament and laughter hollow
Those accents fade.

O balmy dusk and crown'd with Love's own star!
I see the star: I cannot see my Love:
I cry Repentance to the ringing grove:
'Unheard she scorns thy cry;
'Love's quick ear to Love's footstep beats from far'
The Nymphs reply.

I turn from those drear omens of mistrust :

A casement flashes on the palace-wall :

I hear her sliding lattice softly fall :

Love's star I see no more :

The cloud comes weaving o'er the sky with gust

And scornful roar.

VII

AT MIDNIGHT

I dare not bid Time speed his pace :
I dare not bid him linger :
Fate lifts the scale and holds my life
Poised on her even finger.

—Why, my heart, this idle beating ?
Fate is deaf to thine entreating :
Time holds on his equal way :
Calm thee, calm thee, till the day.

I dare not bid the Dawn awake :
I know not what she bears me :
My all is in her rosy hands :
In providence she spares me.

—Yet O Name of hope, Aurora !
By my sunny-hair'd Cleora,
By thyself I thee implore
Dawn on such suspense no more

I dare not watch the paling Night,
Or Dawn's advances number :
My life is in my Darling hid,
And slumbers with her slumber.

—Yet as midnight music streaming
Hear Love's voice within thy dreaming .
Hear my heart within thy heart ;
'All I am for life thou art.'

I dare not bid thee wake, my fate
By those fair lips disclosing :
Thy utter sweetness folds me round,
In Love's own heart reposing.

—Why, my heart, then, why this beating ?
Sleep bars Love to thine entreating :
Night fulfils her long delay :
Wait the promise and the Day.

VIII

VOX CLAMANTIS

When that long yew-tree shade
That grows toward each man from his falling sun
Shall touch me into darkness, undismay'd,
Rejoiced my sands are run :

Come then, Cleora, come,
Come unregretful in thy prime of May,
Relentless of the havoc and the doom
Thou on my life didst lay.

And let thy rosy feet
Tread the rare spike-grass o'er a new-heap'd mound,
And look Truth face to face, and say "Tis meet
That he such rest hath found.

‘There was no other choice.

His soul’s desire for life I might not yield,
Nor set *thine own* to fraudulent smiles and voice
When the heart’s lips were seal’d.

‘I may not now deplore

The death-dried fountain of wan wasted tears ;
The feet that yet would try the perilous shore.
The chase of fruitless years.

‘Ah, not unwarn’d he strove !

All wiser whisperings hush’d, all help repell’d :
What moment’s hope was giv’n, what lure to love ?
What anodyne withheld ?

‘It could not but be so.

The might of Gods contends with Fate in vain :
Rest, hidden dust, assoil’d from earthly woe,
And that forgotten pain.’

Then if, as sages say,

The soul, resolved into some vaster life,
Heeds not what passes o’er its moulder’d clay.
A-rest from hope and strife :

If these dark powers that bind
Our individual selves to nerve and vein,
This fond remembrance, this fore-glancing mind
O'er-running present pain :

If it be Death untwines
This thread of consciousness the Genius spun,
And as the fainting flower on earth declines
The All resume the One :—

O Love, I pray thy feet
May stir my dust to fresh access of pain !
My soul recorporate in the sindon-sheet
Its ancient self regain :

And from that gloom below
Some voice be felt, some last appealing plea :
' Better to feel the gnawing worm, as now,
Than not remember thee.'

Till some reluctant sigh,
Some love of love, that holds her yet so dear,
Dim the blue wonder of Cleora's eye,
And bless me with a tear.

IX

LAST PRAYER

And when returning from the place of death
With something from my grave reflected on thee,
Thy little Sister, laughing thro' lost breath,
Tells thee some baby jest, some young surprise,
Let not that memory quit all hold upon thee,
But smile with quiet eyes :

And touch the happy head, and turn aside
To some white shrine, and pray God's peace may
find me :
That in heaven's dew Lethaeon drops may glide
And pierce the sod and touch th' unrestful head :
Ending the life-long pangs thou hast assign'd me.
Thy lover midst the dead.

The prayer I cannot pray—no more to be ;

Thro' mute aeonian glooms no more adore her :—

Then take these foolish rhymes, faint hints of thee,

And read them o'er and say, 'Twas his request :—

'Cleora's self has barr'd him from Cleora,

'And so has wrought him rest.'

X

FAREWELL

Call her once more, once more,
Cleora ! Cleora !
The rein'd horse darkens the palace door :
There is yet one prayer unheard
One little word :
Farewell, Cleora.

I have sought her in vain the day
Thro' chamber and garden :
A thousand sighs for utterance pray,
And the roses know them well
But they may not tell
The tale to Cleora.

And the mounting rooks to the sky
The farewell are telling :

And the West is red at the passionate cry
But I must whisper it low
Ere yet I go,—
Farewell to Cleora.

So, little one, call her once more,
Call Sister Cleora :
And run to the horse by the garden door
And stroke him with song and shout ;
Whilst I weep out
My soul to Cleora.

There is a hand in my hand :
A gaze on my gazing :
A something passes as there we stand :
But no one word can we say :
Must we for aye
Part, and so, Cleora ?

A thousand thoughts thro' the breast
Run riot and terror :

A thousand sum them in one request :

One word for Love ere I go :

But 'tis not so,

Not so, Cleora.

A hand in my hand ; an eye

Too tender in sadness :

The silence of Love that could not die

Yet knows thou wilt ne'er be mine :—

Yet ever thine

For ever, Cleora !

Whilst even crimsons the west

And homeward birds clamour :

Whilst I lie in that long unrest

And dream in the grave of thee

—So must it be,

Ever, Cleora.

And West is one ruby red,

And homeward birds clamour :

And the dying sun enhaloes thy head :
And O could the thought of thee
Having been, not be,
For ever, Cleora !

—We met in silence : and o'er
Our parting was silence.
Call her no more, no more :—
I have no words can say
For aye, for aye
Farewell, Cleora.

FROM SAPPHO

High lift the beams of the chamber,
 Workmen, on high;
 Like Arés in step comes the Bridegroom;
 Like him of the song of Terpander,
 Like him in majesty.

— O fair — O sweet !

As the sweet apple blooms high on the bough,
 High on the highest, forgot of the gatherers :
 So Thou :—

Yet not so : nor forgot of the gatherers ;
 High o'er their reach in the golden air,
 — O sweet — O fair !

FROM ALKMAN

Sleep mountain-tops and ravines,
Sleep headland and torrent ;
Sleep what dark earth bears on her bosom,
Green leaves and insects ;
Beasts in the den and bees in their families :
Monsters in depths of the violet sea :
Sleeps every bird,
Folding the long wings to slumber.

FROM SIMONIDES

There is a song,
That on high rocks, bright, inaccessible,
Girt with the circling dance, her holy throng,
Doth Virtue dwell :—
Nor on that throne
Seen of all human kind : by him alone,
Heart-pierced in soul-corroding toil, and so
To height of perfect Manhood climbing slow :
—By him alone.

*AN ATHENIAN SONG:**IN HONOUR OF HARMODIUS AND ARISTOGEITON*

Myrtle-wreathed my sword I wave,
As of yore the brothers brave,
When the tyrant sank, and ye
Gave fair Athens liberty.

Loved Harmodius! art not dead!
To the blessed isles hast sped:
Where Achilles fleet and fair
And the son of Tydeus are.

Myrtle-wreathed my sword I wave,
As of yore the brothers brave

'Mid the sacrificial crew
By the shrine Hipparchus slew.

Aye on earth your names will shine.
Brothers brave, beloved, divine ;
Since the tyrant sank, and ye
Gave fair Athens liberty.

NOTES

PAGE 24

Clothed in morning's gifts.

Ἡοῦς ἔχονσα δῶρα.—Euripides; *Alcestis*, l. 289.

PAGE 27

That inland ocean.

The Gulf of Pagasa, nearly closed towards the south by the singular isthmus which stretches between the old towns Olizon and Aphetæ.

PAGE 34

But who will stay me, &c.

Οὐ γάρ σε μήτηρ οὔτε νυμφέυσει ποτὲ Οὐτ' ἐν
τόκοισι σοῖσι θαρσινεῖ, τέκνον.—*Alcestis*, l. 317-8.

PAGE 61

A Song of Life.

For two or three phrases in these stanzas I am indebted to an Ode of great beauty by Ronsard:—a poet who merits more honour than, since his own time, he has received from his countrymen or from foreigners.

PAGE 72

In hopeless chase &c.

Μεταμῶνια θηρέων ἀκράντοις ἐλπίσιν. — Pindar :
Pythia III.

PAGE 80

For '*Why had thou*' read '*Why hast thou*.'

PAGE 87

The Golden Land.

I have here attempted to describe the valley of the Axe, just above and below Axmouth.

PAGE 99

Brecon Bridge.

Brecon, placed where the Honddu joins the Usk, has hence its native name, Aberhonddu (pronounced *Aberhonddy*). Llewellyn, the last independent Prince of Wales, was killed in Breconshire.

PAGE 103

Margaret Wilson.

'A noble instance of self-sacrifice was witnessed at Newcastle on Sunday (May 31). While four children were playing on the railway near the station an engine and tender came up. One little fellow ran for the platform, and his example was followed by his elder sister. Looking back, however, she saw that the other two children were in imminent danger. She returned to them, and drew them to her side, between the rails and the platform. As the engine passed, the connecting-rod struck her

down, and she died in a few moments. The children she had so nobly protected escaped almost unhurt. The name of this heroic little maiden was Margaret Wilson, daughter of a miner.'—*Daily News*, June 3, 1868.

PAGE 117

To a Painter.

Modern Art falls into three periods, or 'moments':—The strictly 'mediaeval,' when the object was almost wholly to aid the religious movement which followed the definite establishment of European civilization after the Norman conquests in France, England, and Italy :—The 'renaissance,' when the object was partly to replace the Christian cycle of representations by motives taken from Graeco-Roman life and legend, partly to bring landscape and common life within the range of art :—The 'modern' (due mainly to the great English painters of the eighteenth century), when the tentative attempts of the previous age were systematized in the distinct aim to extend painting to all subjects, whether belonging to the sphere of man or of nature, which can be represented by the limited powers of Art. It appears obvious that (however the balance may lie between the relative perfection reached in each period), the latter, modern, or English, idea is the only true conception of Art : which, it will be observed, embraces all the preceding aims, while it refuses to assign an exclusive pre-eminence to any of them. Readers who may be interested in the view here set forth will find it treated with more detail in the *Quarterly Review* for April, 1870 ; article upon *Sir C. Eastlake*.

PAGE 120

Pro Mortuis.

Almost all modern English poets have suffered more or less injury from neglect of that decent reverence for the dead which

forbids the sacrilege of publishing imperfect works and tentative phrases :—the ‘secrets of the study’ which a great artist is always most anxious to keep from public view.

PAGE 129

Nor any song so pure &c.

This criticism is intended to cover the whole range of poetry since Milton’s (so far as I am acquainted with it), in Europe, not less than in England.

PAGE 135

Loud-tongued dispensers of fame.

See the reviews of Scott by Lord Jeffrey, Mr. Carlyle, &c. The estimate of Scott here given is more fully worked out in my *Essay*, prefixed to the *Globe* Edition of his poems.

PAGE 138

The famous Review at Tilbury appears to have followed the defeat of the Armada. See Mr. Motley’s excellent account in the *History of the United Netherlands*:—with his earlier work, by far the most valuable literary gift which England has yet received from America.

PAGE 213

Almost all the poems contained in this book were written before 1855.

PAGE 228

This quotation is from one of the too-scanty fragments in which the poetry of Ibycus of Rhegium has reached us. That on the reverse of the title is from a Paean by Bacchylides.

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